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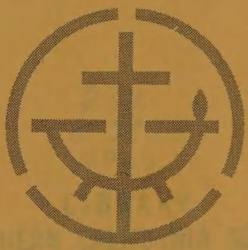

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CHRIST AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

BY

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STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT
32 RUSSELL SQUARE, W.C.1
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TO MY WIFE

University of Southern California

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FOREWORD

THE existence of so admirable a Bible study textbook as Professor Hogg's "Christ's Message of the Kingdom" makes it necessary that I should offer a word of explanation for the *raison d'être* of this book. When Professor Hogg's book came out, I had been working along the lines here laid down for several years, first for myself, and then in small college circles at Oxford. We hailed Professor Hogg's book with joy, and used it largely as a circle textbook in Oxford. But I found myself that the book seemed to call for a companion or supplementary study dealing more in detail with the life of Christ. In this book, as in Professor Hogg's, the Kingdom of God is the central thing. But this book is confined almost entirely to the attempt to trace out in the life of Christ the workings of the principles of the Kingdom of God. More especially does it attempt to set forth Christ as man, subjected to the conditions of his time, and exhibiting in his life the reality of the yoke of the Kingdom of God "learning obedience by the things which he suffered." Hence, while Professor Hogg's book deals extensively with a large range of questions and problems arising out of the practical bearing of the Kingdom of

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God upon Christian life as a whole, this book deals intensively and more purely in an historical way with the Christ of the Synoptic Gospels and his experience of the workings of the Kingdom of God in his own life. It takes up the life of Christ as the *experimentum crucis* of the reality of " the powers of the age to come."

A sentence of Mr Glover's, in the course of his memorable address at the Liverpool Conference, 1913, on " The Death of Christ," still rings in my ears—" Was he God, or was he Man, you'd give anything to know!" It just represents the attitude of so many students I have met. Together we have wrestled over the secrets of those scanty records in the Synoptic Gospels, trying to find how men, into the very fibre of whose being had been wrought the jealous monotheism of Israel, should have been forced to offer to a man whom they had touched and handled, and seen hanging on the felon's gibbet, the worship due to God. Over and over again I have seen such students gradually coming to the realization of Paul's phrase, " God was in Christ." A great deal of current theology unconsciously assumes that the nature of the Incarnation is known, that we can say with certainty what is or what is not possible to God in Incarnation. The standpoint from which this book is written is that we cannot define the method or the manner of God's becoming man, and we cannot say of any particular experience in the life of Christ that it is not proper to God. " Christ died to

bring us to God," "God was in Christ." Those two sentences are the keynote of primitive Christianity, and the point of departure for this brief study.

I should like to add both for myself and for many students whom I know, an expression of sincere gratitude to Professor Hogg for his book. He will probably never know how many students have been decisively helped by it.

Since the above was written, Mr Glover's book, "The Jesus of History," has appeared, to the joy of all students of the life of Christ.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

THE ancient Greek sage said that no man could step into the same river twice. The sense of change, at once oppressive and stimulating, makes one doubt whether a Second Edition of this small book is in any way worth producing, a doubt which a good many of its readers will probably share.

Since it was published the subject has been worked over and over again in student groups in which the writer has shared as friend and fellow-student. The result has been an increasing sense of the splendour and daring of the faith of Jesus; a clearer conviction that the purely ethical teacher of a good deal of Liberal Protestant criticism is not the Jesus of the

Synoptic Gospels; and a deeper belief that apparent loss is the way to essential gain in the understanding of Jesus. This is rather cryptic, but those who have travelled this way will understand.

This edition contains an introductory chapter on the Synoptic Problem, an appendix on the title "Son of Man," and a few footnotes have been inserted.

VICTORIA COLLEGE
October 1921

FOREWORD

TO STUDY CIRCLE LEADERS

The old proverb says that a fool may ask questions which it takes a wise man to answer. My own experience is that to ask the right questions is the beginning of wisdom. Furthermore, experience only answers slowly, and the wise man learns that there is often more profit in the insistent goadings of an unanswered question than in the answer gained without travail. The object of these weekly studies is to suggest questions; the object of the weekly chapter following them is to suggest, not answers, but a line of thought along which some kind of answer may be found. In using the book for circle study there is no need for the leader to confine himself to the questions given in each week's study. Other questions are sure to suggest themselves either to him or to members of the circle. The only thing needed is to draw out the right questions that really matter, and to extinguish the others, tactfully if possible. The secret of success in Bible study circles belongs to the things not seen but eternal. Sincerity, patience, real humility of mind, and prayer, together with a good deal of very real prepara-

tion, are at least some of the things to be found somewhere in the circle. If nobody has begun to think about the subject of the week's study until an hour before the circle meets, it will be a dreary business, and the sooner such a circle has a millstone tied around its neck and disappears into the abyss, the better.

So, while not laying down any rules or even suggestions for daily study, this at least is urged—that any student using this book should give a definite and if possible a regular time during the week to read the passages given, to think out their implications, and to make clear to himself his own position, and possibly his own ignorance, on the points raised by the questions. The leader, and possibly members of the circle, may find of some use in preparation the list of literature given in the notes to each week's study. If possible, all the New Testament passages should be read in Moffatt's New Translation by preference, although Weymouth is good. But for those who know Greek, the systematic use of the Greek Testament is the best habit to form.

The plan of the book follows the main crises of the life of Christ. It falls into four divisions—I. The Preparation for the Ministry, including an introductory chapter on the current expectation of the Kingdom of God in the time of Christ; II. The First Stage of the Ministry and the First Crisis; III. The Second Stage of the Ministry and the Second Crisis; IV. The Final Period and the Passion.

It may be added that the book is intended to form the first of a series of three, leading on to the ministry of the Spirit, and thence to a sketch of the early Church up to the period of the great creeds.

The book is suited for advanced study for second and third year students and theological students, and might profitably be supplemented by lectures on carefully chosen subjects related to some of the more difficult problems which it raises, *e.g.* the Synoptic Problem, Apocalyptic Thought, etc. It was originally intended for a twenty-four weeks' course. Many circles may not wish to meet so many times, and a possible alternative scheme is appended whereby the book may be finished in sixteen weeks. At the same time it should be remembered that it is often a good plan to start a book in circles, and finish it privately, or *vice versa.* Those who wish to do thorough study and have some knowledge of background will not find the weekly studies too short. They contain much material. For private study the book is suitable for junior and senior students alike and might be used as a private study in the long vacation.

Alternative Scheme

1st study ch. 1
2nd study ch. 2 and 3
3rd study ch. 4, 5 and 6
4th study ch. 7
5th study ch. 8
6th study ch. 9
7th study ch. 10
8th study ch. 11
9th study ch. 12 and 13
10th study ch. 14
11th study ch. 15
12th study ch. 16 and 17
13th study ch. 18 and 19
14th study ch. 20 and 21
15th study ch. 22
16th study ch. 23

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INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

The Synoptic Problem. So long as one accepts a view of the Gospels which regards them as four independent and supernaturally guaranteed accounts of the life of Jesus, no problem exists. But as soon as it is recognized that the various accounts of Jesus current in the first century must be treated like any other ancient documents, and subjected to the most careful textual and historical criticism, the phenomena which constitute what is called the Synoptic Problem appear at once. A short bibliography is given at the end of this chapter for any students who wish to follow up the subject more fully. Here it is only possible to give a brief summary of the general position and the main assumptions upon which this book proceeds.

(i) First of all a very sharp distinction becomes apparent between the first three Gospels and the Fourth. The divergence is so profound and far-reaching that to many modern students it is impossible to accept the historicity of both pictures of Jesus. If the Jesus of the first three Gospels is historical then the resplendent figure of the Fourth Gospel is something more.

Hence the first main position is the separation

of the first three Gospels from the Fourth, and the relegation of the Fourth to the beginnings of reflection and interpretation, as the greatest of all the attempts that have been made to say what Jesus *meant* in experience.

This debars us from using the Fourth Gospel as independent historical evidence in our attempt to reconstruct the figure of the historical Jesus.

The student will have to work out the reasons for this position for himself.

(ii) When we take the first three Gospels and compare them we find certain plain facts :

(*a*) The two longer Gospels of Matthew and Luke contain almost the whole of the shorter Gospel of Mark (all but thirty verses).

(*b*) Matthew and Luke also contain a large quantity of material, chiefly discourses and parables, not found in Mark, but common to them both. There is a large measure of agreement, both in language and arrangement of this material.

(*c*) In addition, each of the two longer Gospels contains some important material peculiar to itself, partly discourse, and partly narrative, relating to the birth and death of Jesus.

(iii) The explanation of these facts commonly accepted by the majority of New Testament students is :

(*a*) The Gospel of Mark is the earliest account of Jesus.

(*b*) The Gospels of Matthew and Luke written later have taken Mark as their basis and have embodied Mark, with certain changes in language and order, in their own narrative.

(*c*) The compilers of Matthew and Luke have also used a written collection of sayings of Jesus which they have handled in the same way as Mark, altering, rearranging and omitting material according to their respective aims in writing.

(*d*) The compilers of the two later Gospels have also collected material from other sources, early traditions and so forth, to which the usual tests of historical probability must be applied.

Hence the problem before a student who has accepted the historical viewpoint and methods is :

(*a*) To determine as nearly as possible the original form of any saying of Jesus and the actual facts underlying the accounts of his doings.

(*b*) To determine as far as possible what sayings are genuine utterances of Jesus,

and what represent later ideas or reflections superadded.

(*c*) To determine as far as possible the order of sayings and actions in the life of Jesus.

(*d*) To discover, if possible, the clue, the dominant viewpoint and motive which may give coherence and significance to the whole of his life.

This gives in the main the position adopted by the writer in relation to the Synoptic Problem and its bearing on the larger problem of reconstructing the drama of the life of Jesus. The minute details upon which such a position rests cannot be given here, and the student who wishes to work out the position fully should consult the following :

Streeter : "The Synoptic Problem" in "Peake's Commentary on the Bible."

Streeter : "The Literary Evolution of the Gospels" in "Oxford Studies on the Synoptic Problem." Other essays and studies in this volume will be found invaluable to the student.

Burkitt : "The Gospel History and its Transmission."

Burkitt : "The Earliest Sources for the Life of Jesus."

The serious student will find the constant use of a Synopsis or Harmony of the Gospels indispensable. For those who read the New Testament in Greek, Huck's "Synopse der drei

ersten Evangelien" is by far the most convenient; for those who use the English version my friend Dr H. B. Sharman's admirable "Harmony of the Gospels" will give the necessary help. Those who wish to know something about the textual criticism of the New Testament should read Professor Kirsopp Lake's little "Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament," which is a masterpiece of scholarship.

FIRST DIVISION

THE PREPARATION

I

JEWISH IDEAS IN THE TIME OF CHRIST CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

STUDY I

PASSAGES FOR DAILY STUDY

Luke 1:15-18, 32, 68-79; 2:25-38; 3:4-17; Matt. 20; 21; Mark 10:35-37; Luke 13:23; 14:15.

NOTES

This is an introductory study, necessary for the understanding of the whole background of thought against which the life of Christ stands out. The student will certainly need to read something of the great literature that is rapidly growing up around this new and fascinating subject. It is particularly necessary to avoid reading back into the Gospels and even into the sayings of Christ ideas which belong to a much later and more theological period of Christian thought. A little study will show two main things—first, that the expectation of the actual coming of the Kingdom of God on earth forms the keynote of Jewish history during the last two centuries B.C. and the first century A.D.; and second that there were many ways of thinking of the Kingdom, many forms in which the hope of the Kingdom manifested itself, varying from the most spiritual to the most material. The following books will be helpful:

Crawford Burkitt: "Jewish and Christian Apocalypses."
Charles: "Eschatology, Hebrew, Jewish and Christian."
Oesterley: "The Doctrine of the Last Things."
Oesterley: "The Evolution of the Messianic Idea."
Scott: "The Kingdom and the Messiah."
Kirsopp Lake: "The Stewardship of Faith."

QUESTIONS

1. What do you think John the Baptist meant by his message, "the Kingdom of God is at hand"? What did his hearers understand by it?
2. From what sources did the Jews in the time of Christ draw their expectation of the coming Kingdom?
3. What was in the mind of the speakers in Luke 13:23 and 14:15?
4. What does the word "salvation" mean in Luke 1:68-79?

CHAPTER I

JEWISH IDEAS IN THE TIME OF CHRIST CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

LAGRANGE in his very valuable book, "Le Messianisme chez les Juifs," has described the closing century of Jewish national history as "Messianism in action." The phrase sums up admirably the intense flame of desire for the Kingdom of God which was consuming that unhappy nation. It is impossible to understand the keynote of Christ's life without some appreciation of what was going on all the time under the surface of Jewish life. The fires are extinct and cold now, and many of the phrases and even the questions in the Gospels—idle questions they seem to us now—are almost meaningless, unless by an effort of imaginative sympathy we can make them glow again with the fire of Messianic expectation. It is impossible in one short chapter to go back to the roots of this strange and unique impulse in Jewish national history. Special reference may be made to pp. 5-10 of Prof. Kirsopp Lake's brilliant book, "The Stewardship of Faith," for a very clear summary of the development of the Jewish view of the Kingdom of God.

We must limit ourselves here to a bird's-eye view of the different forms which this expecta-

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tion took in the time of Christ. Several important points will come up again for discussion later on in our studies.

The first circle which meets us over and over again in the Gospels is that of the Pharisees who are generally coupled with the Scribes, the professional students of the Torah. The Pharisees have a bad name, but their part in the history of Judaism is a very fine one. Paul himself is a proof of what Pharisaism at its best could produce. At a time when the Jews were in danger of merging altogether into Hellenism, the Pharisees carried on the work of the old Hasidim, the Puritans of the bad days of Antiochus Epiphanes, and asserted the central importance of the Law. While there were various sects among the Pharisees, some narrower, some more liberal, and various shades of belief existed among them concerning the precise order of the events of the last days, all agreed on the central point that the coming of the Kingdom of God depended on the keeping of the Law. So much was this the case that among the more liberal Jews of the Dispersion the glorification of the Law had displaced the Messianic hope. There was a rabbinic saying current in various forms, to the effect that if all Israel could only keep the Law perfectly for a single day Messiah would come. Hence, while there was much bigotry and narrowness, much unreality in the strict orthodoxy of the Pharisees with which Christ clashed so often, yet under it there was a spirit of passionate desire

for the Kingdom of God which explains much that now seems absurd to us in the meticulous exactness with which they sought to keep the letter of the Law.

Over against them stand the Sadducees, the priestly party, inheriting the prestige and power, but not the spirit, of the old Maccabees. Much is still obscure about the precise religious beliefs of the Sadducees. They probably regarded many of the Pharisaic beliefs as dangerous innovations, and considered themselves as representing the old conservative point of view. But as we see them in the Gospels, their principal anxiety is to keep the continual, suppressed Messianic expectation and tension from breaking out into a flame of revolt. They certainly believed in the coming of the Kingdom as a pious hope; it was to come, it would come anyhow. Meanwhile, it was no good to get excited. They enjoyed what measure of power was left to the nation, and grew rich on the sale of temple victims and the system of exchange which required all sacrificial animals to be bought with the temple coinage. They stood to lose these things if any ill-considered outbreak of Messianism should bring down the heavy hand of Rome and cause the temple worship to be finally suppressed. Hence the Sadducees, who probably troubled little about the precise nature of Christ's teaching, grew alarmed at once when things began to look threatening at Jerusalem. The so-called triumphal entry, and the cleansing

of the temple, were probably the historical causes which led to the death of Christ.

In addition to these two parties, there was another of which we do not hear so much in the Gospels, but which is probably referred to in some of Christ's most characteristic sayings. They were the Zealots, of whom at least one, Simon the Cananean or the Zealot (for the epithet Cananean is the Aramaic equivalent of the Greek form ζηλωτής), was of the company of the Twelve. They were impatient both of the ineffectual methods of the Pharisees and of the masterly inactivity of the Sadducees. They believed in an appeal to the ordeal of battle. They wished to rise against the might of Rome in one desperate splendid venture and stake all on the intervention of God at the last moment. They had their way at last, and the final destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was the result. The attention of New Testament scholars has been drawn to this interesting sect of late, and it is probable that many of Christ's sayings against the use of force are directed against the Zealots, with whom his own disciples would have much sympathy. Thus we find a third view of the way the Kingdom might come.

But underneath, amongst the common people, for whom the Pharisees had little use, there had grown up an intense and earnest expectation of that "divine event" which seemed to them anything but "far off." They had fed, not only on the prophets, but on a literature of

which we are only now beginning to understand the significance. Books like first and second Enoch, first and second Baruch, fourth Ezra, full of visions of a glorious future in which all the past woes of Israel would be a thousand times repaid, nourished their hopes and strengthened their faith. Nor was this hope unethical, even if it was inevitably material. A short selection of typical passages from some of these books which were actually current about the time of Christ, given at the end of this book, will show the character of these hopes. The Canticles in Luke 1 are thoroughly representative of the beautiful and quiet piety of that unknown and humble circle that waited for redemption in Israel. For them "salvation" in its technical sense included two things, deliverance from their enemies, and forgiveness of their sins. How these two things could be brought together in one great act of divine intervention was the problem facing the circle into which Christ was born and among whom he grew up. We shall see that it is impossible to think of him as uninfluenced by all these currents of thought. This was the atmosphere in which he came to maturity, and unless we take the trouble to reconstruct it for ourselves from the hints of the Gospels, plentiful enough when we have learnt to look for them, and from the apocalyptic literature already mentioned, we shall not have the key to the meaning of the life of Christ.

II

THE CHILDHOOD OF CHRIST

STUDY II

PASSAGE FOR DAILY STUDY

Luke 2 : 40-52.

NOTES

The passage for this week is short, and should be read as often as possible and thought over carefully. Consider the meaning of Christ's answer to his mother. Note the right rendering of his words given in the chapter on this subject. Consider the bearing of the whole incident on Christ's mental and spiritual development.

QUESTIONS

1. What did Christ mean by his answer to his mother ?
2. What do you understand by the statement in Luke 2 : 52, that Jesus grew in wisdom, and in favour with God ?
3. Was the thought of the Fatherhood of God a new one in the time of Christ ? (Cf. Deut. 32 : 6 ; Isaiah 63 : 16 ; 64 : 8.)
4. What does the whole story convey to you concerning the personality of Jesus ?

CHAPTER II

THE CHILDHOOD OF CHRIST

In our last study we tried to reconstruct the religious background of Christ's time, its complexity, its restlessness, its mingled optimism and pessimism. We saw something of the nature of the circle of choice souls, waiting for the redemption of Israel, into which Christ was born. We do not think much about Christ's childhood and its relation to his later life, partly because we have so little information about it, and partly because of the unnatural way in which, unconsciously, we have come to think of the life of Christ.

Yet, if the human life of Christ was real, the impressions and lessons of his childhood formed his manhood. In the reading for the week occurs the passage, "and Jesus advanced in wisdom and age (R.V.) and in favour with God and man." This must be taken at its full face value. It means what it says. Jesus learnt at home the Old Testament Scriptures, and when he was old enough, heard the Law and the prophets read in the synagogue in their yearly rotation. He learnt in that circle, so vividly drawn by Luke, to think of the coming Kingdom of God as no dream, but a glorious certainty; that is, his views of the Kingdom of God and his conception of his own part in it were the fruit of the natural process of learning and

study and maturer meditation as he grew in age.

The special object of this week's study is to read with a fresh mind the one incident of Christ's childhood which has been preserved. Luke took pains to collect all the information possible from the best sources. He must have had access to the inner circle of Christ's relatives; possibly he had talked with Mary, the mother of Jesus. If he does not tell us more it is most likely because there was not much to tell. The stream ran quietly but deep. The verse already quoted represents the uneventful childhood of obedience.

Hence, the one story, laid up in the mother's memory, puzzling her by its mystery, challenges us to gather what we may from it.

It is not necessary to repeat the details. The centre of interest lies in the child's strange answer, so baffling to his parents. Perhaps a retranslation may help towards a fresh reading of the incident — "why were you seeking for me? Were you not aware that I should be in my Father's house?" In the first place, the presence of the child among the rabbis and his interest in their discussions is not so strange as it may seem to us. Similar cases might be cited from the rabbinical literature. We have to think of the child, who had already thought and pondered over what his parents had taught him of the coming Kingdom, Elias the forerunner, and the Messiah, listening to the rabbis talking

over and discussing these subjects; he breaks in with apt questions and quotations and amazes them by the evidence of his interest in such things and his knowledge of the Scriptures. Then come the troubled parents, and the mother's natural rebuke—"We have been looking everywhere for you." He answers, "Why, I thought you would be sure to know where I was, in my Father's house."

Later on, Jesus said to his disciples—"Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter the Kingdom of God." I think that here lies the point of the story. In childhood spiritual things are as real as material things. When we grow older, the world is too much with us and the material things are so much more real to us that we need the pangs of re-birth to give us entrance again into the spiritual world. But with Jesus it was not so, and this deep simplicity it was that baffled his parents. They had taught him that the Temple was God's house, their Father's house, and taught him to look forward to the time when as "a son of the law" he would be able to go up with them to visit and to worship at that glorious place. To him all this was intensely real, real with a reality of which they, pious people though they were, knew nothing, a reality which, as we shall have occasion to notice, grew and deepened for him as years went on. Hence he cannot understand why they should have hesitated for a moment as to where they would find him.

He supposes that for them, as for him, that place would be home.

This is the first glimpse into the consciousness of Christ, the only one that we have into his child-mind. It shows us the divine simplicity of the child, our only door into the Kingdom of God, in Christ. We see Christ receiving spiritual realities "as a little child," and in childlike simplicity accepting them as real, more real than anything else, real in a way of which his parents had not dreamed.

At the very outset, then, Christ's life confirms to us one of the fundamental principles of the Kingdom. That is what this solitary splendid story of the childhood of Jesus gives us. He enters in by the "lowly door" into the spiritual heritage into which as Leader and Completer of the Faith he was to bring us, many sons unto glory.

III

THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

STUDY III

PASSAGES FOR DAILY STUDY

Matt. 3 : 13-17 ; Mark 1 : 9-11 ; Luke 3 : 21-22.

NOTES

The account given in the Gospel of Mark clearly implies that the vision at the Baptism was for Christ alone. The supplementary account in the fourth Gospel states that John the Baptist also saw at least part of the vision. It is possible that the incident of John's hesitation recorded only in Matthew may throw light on the account given in the fourth Gospel. It suggests that the Baptist shared to some extent the experience of Christ, realizing with the prophet's sympathy and sensitiveness the nature of his own act and of Christ's decision, and entering in some measure into the emotion and exaltation and inward vision of Christ. The point, however, does not affect the main line of explanation taken up in our chapter, but is mentioned here only because the question is sure to be raised in discussion. The lines along which Christ's experience are interpreted here will also throw light on the Baptist's experience at the same time.

QUESTIONS

1. In comparing the three accounts of the Baptism what points of difference strike you especially ?
2. Do the experiences of the prophets throw any light on Christ's experience at the Baptism ? (Compare Isaiah's call.)
3. From what source do you consider the Evangelists have drawn their account of the experience of Christ at the Baptism ?

CHAPTER III

THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

> "He told it not; or something sealed
> The lips of that Evangelist."

THE silences of the Gospel history are sometimes as eloquent as its speech, if we try to read them. There is a silence of about sixteen years between the glimpse into the mind of the child Jesus which was the subject of our last study, and the more prolonged and intense light which breaks for us upon his mature consciousness in the story of his baptism and temptation. Outwardly these years were probably quiet enough, but we have to think of them as related to the events we are dealing with now. During these years that passion for the Kingdom of God which was to carry him to the bitter end was being kindled and nourished. The simplicity and intensity of spiritual grasp which is the keynote of the story of the finding in the Temple was maturing. The Father's Kingdom was growing real to him as the Father's house of the childhood story. Many things in the prophet's visions of the future and in the current expectations that surged all round him must have been quietly turned over in his mind, and not a few obscure sayings in his later life seem to throw us back for light upon this time of slowly forming purpose.

Then the small circle of the life at Nazareth

was stirred and shaken by the report of a new prophet, with a message that met the smouldering desires of men's hearts and drew them after him to the Jordan's banks. The message that the Kingdom of God was at hand must have come like a trumpet call to Jesus. He left his home, laying down for ever his workman's tools, and mingled with the crowd that listened to the Baptist's message. Then he saw people of the class for whom the religious leaders of the day had no room in their vision of the Kingdom —the hated publicans, the harlots—publicly proclaiming themselves as sinners. One who above all things had so deep a sense of reality must have felt profoundly moved by the sight of such reality shown in such a pathetic way. These people, at any rate, had gone beyond pious phrases and smug complacency, they were hungering and thirsting for righteousness. For them at least the Kingdom of God was a reality. In such a scene his patiently nourished purpose and passion for the Kingdom of God found an answer perhaps unexpected; he saw his way, made the first great decision of his life, and joined himself with these people who sought the Kingdom of God. The greatness of the decision is best measured by the attendant emotions and reactions. Here we come upon the ground that can be rightly apprehended only if we are willing to give full human value to the experience recorded. It is necessary to see first that the baptism as an act of vital decision, the experi-

ences immediately following it, and the temptations ensuing, are all intimately and organically connected, just as the act of decision itself stands directly related to the period of formation in Nazareth.

This is a point which has already been urged and will recur again and again, that the more frankly and fully we admit the naturalness and humanness of Christ's experiences, the more we find them fall under the laws governing our own spiritual life, and the deeper does their significance become.

First of all, the whole scene evidently represents the crystallization in Christ's mind of all his previous thought about the Kingdom; all he had pondered over is brought to the sharp focal point of clear vision by the challenge to action. The Kingdom was at hand; here were people, not Pharisees, not Sadducees, but publicans and harlots, responding with the witness of deepest sincerity. Here, in stepping into Jordan, he feels himself, so to speak, stepping into the swift current of the divine purpose, committing himself to it in such company as this for whatever issue God might have for them all. It was a great, an immense act of decision.

The testimony of the lives of those called saints shows clearly the law of relation between the three things we have to deal with here in the experience of Christ. We see that a focal point of decision is never a cold and bloodless thing, it is always hot, white hot, it is always

accompanied by intense emotion and clearness of spiritual vision. The senses are for the time preternaturally sharpened, sensitive to the vibrations of the spiritual world where we are so little at home by nature. Further, the moment of emotion and insight is so intense that it can be expressed afterwards only in the language of the usual channels of sensation, such as sight or hearing. And lastly, the moment of exaltation is brief, it passes, and is always followed by reaction and depression.

So we find here with Christ. The decision, whose greatness we often fail to grasp, especially in its relation to the general attitude of the time, was accompanied by a moment of intense spiritual exaltation and vision. He knew, as the saints know, that he had entered the path that God meant him to follow, he was profoundly conscious of the Father's approval of his act of decision. He felt in a new and intenser way the significance of the fact that he had grasped as a child, the fact of Sonship, and he felt the sense of power. He was committed, with this strange company, to the realization of the Kingdom of God; that would need power, God's power, and with that power he felt himself endued. So the vision passed, the heavens closed again. Mark uses the vivid word that perhaps represents the personal touch of experience, "he saw the heavens rending." Heaven and earth were strangely near at that moment of mystic exaltation.

We do not always stop to think and ask where the information came from about these things. But if this was the special personal experience of Christ, perhaps dimly shared and partially reflected in the mind of the Baptist alone, it must have been told by Jesus himself to his disciples when he saw they would need it. Decision would have to come for them as for him, and he must have told them, in such symbolic language as the prophets had used and they would understand, what had come to him after the great decision had been made. He must have told them, too, about the reaction, the struggle that followed, but with this we shall deal in our next studies.

IV

THE FIRST TEMPTATION

STUDY IV

Passages for Daily Study

Matt. 4 : 1-4 ; Mark 1 : 12-13 ; Luke 4 : 1-4, 22-28 ; Heb. 2 : 18 ; 4 : 15.

Notes

The student may find help from Sanday's "Outlines of the Life of Christ," Latham's "Pastor Pastorum," and Neville Talbot's "The Mind of the Disciples," but the great thing is to read and reread the actual passages psychologically connected with the Baptism.

Questions

1. What is the connection, if any, between the Baptism and the Temptation ?
2. What does the passage in Hebrews 4 : 15 imply ?
3. What constituted the point of attack in the first temptation ?

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST TEMPTATION

In his book, "The Gospel History and its Transmission," Professor Crawford Burkitt remarks, "Our Gospels are very far from being a sort of psychological novel with Jesus Christ for hero." The remark is just and necessary. Some of the best known of the liberal Protestant lives of Christ are little else. But unless we are to give up any attempt to understand the significance of the life of Jesus, we must try to construct from the Gospels, the first three in particular, some coherent view of the reason why Christ did things; some broad conception of his outlook on life, which shall be at once psychologically possible, true to historical conditions, and such as may help us to understand why the first great theologian of the Church could say "God was in Christ."

Now in dealing with the Baptism and Temptation, the last of these three points has been principally in view in most of the interpretations of the Church. Chiefly as the result of the great doctrinal controversies of the early centuries of its history, the Church has emphasized only one side of Christ, the divine. In Mr Rawlinson's words, "There has been a tendency to treat the Incarnation as a Theophany; to think of the historic Christ, in other words, as simply a manifestation of Godhead in human flesh, and to

ignore the completeness and genuineness of his manhood." [1]

Hence many incidents in the life of Jesus have been dealt with as flashes of that inner divine consciousness which was assumed to exist alongside of his human consciousness, and any attempt to explain them as arising out of the laws of human mentality and the historical conditions has been excluded as irreverent. Without assuming any particular position, our object is to see if, by attempting to interpret such incidents in Christ's life as the Baptism and Temptation entirely from the human standpoint, they do not become more real, intelligible, and significant for our own spiritual life. I wish to say frankly that there is no thought of dogmatizing here, but simply an endeavour to set out what the meaning of the life of Christ has come to be for oneself.

Now in dealing with the Temptation of Christ it is specially necessary that we should seek to understand the reality of the Temptation, its relation to the actual circumstances in which Christ found himself, and why it was a "temptation" at all. It is so necessary because here, if anywhere, the life of Christ must have true human meaning. So the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews felt, and he surely reflected the mind of the early Church, when he said, "who was in every respect tempted after the same fashion as we are, without sin." It is not too

[1] Dogma, Fact, and Experience, by A. E. J. Rawlinson, p. 113.

much to say that if the temptations of Christ were unreal, then this part of Christ's experience is both utterly unintelligible and utterly valueless for our own experience. Taking up then the line of interpretation begun in our last chapter, we find the decision accompanied by intense exaltation and vision and followed by reaction. It is the reaction with which we have now to deal.

The sense of the tremendous issues hanging on the decision just taken compels Jesus to seek retirement and solitude. In this solitude, during long days of fasting and nights of vigil and prayer, Christ faced the question of the future. The account of the Baptism and its experience, coming as it must have done from Christ himself, shows that he felt the event to be a crisis in his life. It is from the Temptation that we gather the nature of the crisis.

The opening words of the first temptation, as we call it—though really it is all one temptation passing through successive and related phases—show that it is the direct outcome of the experience at the Baptism. "Thou art my beloved Son" were the words in which Christ expressed his experience, his consciousness of God. "If thou be the Son of God" directly challenges and questions this experience. There is a struggle in the mind of Christ. It takes this form, the natural result of reaction after strain and exaltation, of a questioning of the reality and value of this spiritual experience through

which he had just passed. It is evident that the great question before the mind of Christ was the nature of his appeal to those among whom his mission lay. It is the age-long struggle of the prophet's soul at the outset of his mission, "They will say the Lord hath not appeared unto thee," "show me a sign that thou talkest with me." In face of the deeply felt sense of the narrowness, the hardness, the blindness of those to whom he must go with the message of God, the prophet, the sent one of God, will always feel first of all the precariousness, the apparent inadequacy of his own experience of God as the ground of his mission. Christ felt what the prophet had felt. In the reaction, the depression, he realizes how seemingly slight a ground of appeal he has, and the whole issue is faced and fought first of all on this point, "Is that experience of God, profoundly and movingly felt at the Baptism, sufficient ground for me to go on, to go out and face this people with?"

We saw that the experience was, so to speak, a complex one; the sense of the nearness of heaven, the approval of the Father sealing his decision, was accompanied by a sense of power in filling him for the work before him. Here lay the psychological point of the Temptation. It is the form in which to prophets and saints the temptation has most often come. It is only those who face the venture of faith who know such temptations, and Christ, the leader and completer of the faith, knew them to the utmost.

John Bunyan in his "Grace Abounding" has given a classic example of this temptation in his own experience. This is his own account of it: "Wherefore, while I was thus considering, and being put to my plunge about it . . . the Tempter came in with his delusion, that there was no way for me to know I had faith, but by trying to work some miracle, urging those Scriptures that seem to look that way, for the enforcing and strengthening his temptation. Nay, one day as I was betwixt Elstow and Bedford, the temptation was hot upon me, to try if I had faith, by doing of some miracle: which miracle at that time was this, I must say to the puddles that were in the horse-pads, be dry; and to the dry places, be you the puddles. And truly, one time I was going to say so indeed; but just as I was about to speak, this thought came into my mind, but go under yonder hedge and pray first, that God would make you able. But when I had concluded to pray, this came hot upon me, that if I prayed, and came again and tried to do it, and yet did nothing notwithstanding, then be sure I had no faith, but was a castaway and lost. Nay, thought I, if it be so, I will never try yet, but will stay a little longer."

So here the precise occasion lay to hand, and the point was the same. The sense of power, the sense that in sealing his decision with approval the Father had entrusted to him the power of the Kingdom, was a part of the experience in question. If the sense of endowment with

power was real, then the rest of the experience would be real, and what could be simpler than to settle the whole issue by using the power to meet the needs of the moment? Here we find the uniqueness of Christ. He saw (and his use of the old passage in Deut. 8: 3 shows how he read the Scriptures—not in the letter but in the spirit) that spiritual experience, the soul's experience of God, was the ultimate reality in human life, not to be proved by any purely physical manifestations.

The word going out of God's mouth, the direct experience of God, was what man must live by. So Christ fought the issue there of the first great crisis of spiritual experience, and vindicated for ever the reality beyond proof, of the life of the spirit. The particular occasion and circumstance of the crisis was temporary, and arose out of the historical conditions of Christ's time, but the principle at stake, made good by Christ, is eternal.

V

THE SECOND TEMPTATION

STUDY V

PASSAGES FOR DAILY STUDY

Matt. 4 : 5-7 ; Luke 4 : 9-12 ; Mal. 3 : 1 ; John 7 : 27 ; Matt. 16 : 1 ; Mark 8 : 11 ; Luke 11 : 16.

NOTES

Observe the variation in order between Matthew and Luke, and consider which of the two seems to you the original sequence. The question of the literal truth of the narrative, e.g. the actual carrying of Christ to the temple by the devil, may be partly discussed here, but fuller discussion should be left if possible to the next study, as already suggested. Compare for the particular instance mentioned Ezek. 3 : 14 ; 8 : 3 ; and 11 : 24.

QUESTIONS

1. Which of the Gospels appears to you to represent the original order of the temptations ?
2. How do you understand the statement that the devil placed Christ on a pinnacle of the temple ?
3. What constituted the point of attack in the second temptation ?

CHAPTER V

THE SECOND TEMPTATION

The second phase of the Temptation follows naturally after the first. It also brings us closer to the contemporary conditions of the Messianic expectation, and shows more clearly the lines upon which Christ's mind was moving. The struggle may be conceived as continuing in this way. Christ takes his stand upon the ultimate reality of spiritual experience, his own in particular. It suffices for him. No sign or manifestation of power can make it more real to him.

But now the question arises whether some manifestation of divine power is not necessary to show the people, his own people, who he is. Spiritual experience, inward conviction of his relationship to God and of his mission, may suffice for him, but will it suffice for them? Here again the current of Christ's thoughts falls into Old Testament channels and shows us an Old Testament expectation which had been developed along familiar apocalyptic lines. In Mal. 3 : 1, we have the prophecy, "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple," and reflected in various passages in the Gospels, as well as in numerous apocalyptic passages, we find the belief that Messiah would suddenly appear in the temple or in the heavens above Jerusalem. In John 7 : 27, one of the

difficulties which the Jews of Jerusalem are represented as feeling, with regard to the identification of Jesus with the Messiah, is that everyone knows where Jesus comes from, whereas the popular belief about Messiah was that his coming must be supernatural and sudden. The same point is reflected in the repeated request put to Christ both by Pharisees and Sadducees that he should show them a sign from heaven. What they sought was not such miracles of healing as they were already abundantly familiar with, but some such sign as would prove that he came down from heaven. Here in this temptation we find Christ's sense of such a belief among his people, and his consciousness or belief that the experience he had just been through meant that he was marked out by God for a special position in the Kingdom, which could only be that of Messiah. Hence the suggestion is that he must show a sign from heaven, if he is to be recognized as the Person marked out by God to bring in the Kingdom.

With the swiftness of thought he is transported to the Temple, now so familiar to him, the scene of his first vivid boyhood impression. He sees again, as from the lofty wall of the outer court, the busy throngs of worshippers, and pictures to himself the rapture and enthusiasm with which he would be received by them if he should suddenly appear amongst them descending, as though upborne by angels, into their midst.

The suggestion is striking, and the temptation subtle enough. There is Scripture sanction both for the particular form of the expectation, and for angelic support if such a venture were made.

But the same clearness of vision, always undimmed in Christ when it was a question of the way of the Spirit, showed him that if he had found for himself that the Father's way of revelation was purely spiritual; if he himself could learn who he was only by way of spiritual experience, no other way was possible for others. They must come to know him, and knowing him learn what the Kingdom was to be, by the same way, not easy save to little children, the way of spiritual experience.

It may be that Christ did not fully realize all the consequences yet of such a decision, the divergence from the common way of thinking. That we shall see later. But this phase of the Temptation issues in the further victory of a decision that if God's way for him was the way of experience, living by the word going out of God's mouth, then it must be so for others. The old, old demand for a sign—"Is the Lord among us or not?"—was just tempting God, putting him to a test which proved nothing but the doubt and faint-heartedness of those who put the test. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

So once more far-reaching gain is made by Christ's decision. The full consequences are

hardly realized even now by the Church. Her history shows how often she has preferred flesh and blood methods, rather than the way of the Spirit.

The outcome, then, of the Temptation so far is that Christ, looking out upon the work that lies before him, considering the question of the ground of his appeal and the means of enforcing it, chooses deliberately, yet not calmly, but under tremendous stress of conflict, that the way into the Kingdom for himself and for others shall be the deepest, truest, and indeed the only way, the way of spiritual experience. People could not be forced into the knowledge of these things. There must be deliberate acceptance. The way was strait and the door narrow, as Christ came to realize more and more in the days to come. Men must agonize to enter.

One further point that comes out here is that we have in the mind of Christ a deliberate rejection of the current view of miracles, as "signs" intended to "prove" some spiritual reality intellectually. Whatever miracles were for Christ, and whatever he used them for, at least he did not use his power to prove his Messiahship. That is clearly shown by the first two phases of the Temptation.

VI

THE THIRD TEMPTATION

STUDY VI

PASSAGES FOR DAILY STUDY

Matt. 4 : 8-11 ; Luke 4 : 5-8 ; Psalm 72 : 8-11 ; Isa. 9 : 6, 7 ; Zech. 9 : 9, 10.

NOTES

In this concluding study a number of loose ends may be gathered up. Some elasticity should be allowed here, and if the discussion is good, and members wish to continue it, the subject may easily be carried into a fresh week, before starting the second division of the whole. For some of the points raised the student will find Sanday's "Personality in Christ and Ourselves," and McDowall's "Evolution and the Need of Atonement" helpful, also commentaries on special passages quoted. But avoid too much use of commentaries ; on the whole they confuse.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the final point of attack in the last temptation ?
2. From what source do you consider the evangelists have drawn their information as to the Temptation of Christ ?
3. Consider whether in the growth of later legend the Church could have invented the story of the Temptation.
4. What bearing has the Temptation of Christ upon the spiritual life of a Christian ?

CHAPTER VI

THE THIRD TEMPTATION

We have seen that the very conflict, the very fact that there was temptation in the suggestions refused by Christ, shows the divergence from the concensus of current opinion. Nothing is harder than for a sensitive mind, unbrutalized by misuse of power, to take a course that runs counter to convictions hallowed and sanctioned by the associations of the past. In this case Christ felt that even the Scriptures themselves might be used against him. But the full weight of this pressure of what we may call "pious opinion" comes last. Christ must have realized, if only in part, that such means as his choice implied would make it hard for the Kingdom to come. He was throwing a great burden on God, so to speak, and also a great burden on man.

There were the hard facts of contemporary history. The Romans were masters of the world. The Jews were a tiny subject people, enjoying the remnant of civil and religious liberty only at the pleasure of the Romans. How far would the method of spiritual experience, the individual reception of a spiritual message, go toward removing this great material mountain that barred the way to a realization of the age-long Messianic dreams? And then there swept before him the old vision of the

prophets, the world-wide Kingdom, Zion the joy of the whole earth, the nations bringing their glory and honour into her, a Messiah ruling in righteousness, and all kings serving him. How could such a kingdom ever be realized save by methods such as the Zealots advocated, and such as had been already vindicated in the glorious episode of the Maccabean rising? How puny and ineffective seemed the way of the Spirit! If the prophets were not too pious and spiritual to think of a warrior Messiah, of a day of battle and confused noise, and of garments rolled in blood, why should he be superior to them? He need only use the temporal weapons of revolt and war to crush the Romans, then let spiritual means have their place. We seem to have met the suggestion in our own day. The crisis here was perhaps the most acute of all. It was not so much the questioning of the value of some part of his experience, as facing the consequences of choosing the path which his previous preparation in Nazareth, reinforced by this immense experience, pointed out. There is no "if thou be" in this temptation, but a tremendous "if thou wilt." It is the final choice of one path and the final rejection of the other. But the path from which he was turning seemed to have so much in its favour. Stated in its nakedness, the suggestion of falling down and worshipping the devil hardly seems to offer a "temptation" to Christ. But it is Christ's own way of putting it—he told the

story. At such a time things are seen in high lights, there are no half tones, all is sharp black and white. And the path which involved such methods of force as the Zealots invoked to establish the material earthly kingdom seemed to Christ, as he saw things in that fierce light, the final sin of denying God. The same spirit that spoke in Luther at Worms in those great words "here I stand, I can do no other, God help me," spoke in Christ when he said, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Christ threw the responsibility back on God; if the Kingdom was to come as the prophets and poets of Israel had dreamed, then that was God's business. For him the only thing was to do God's will as he saw it, in God's way. That was the whole of life for him.

And so light breaks, heaven is near again with angels ascending and descending as of old—

> "The angels keep their ancient places,
> Turn but a stone and start a wing;
> 'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangéd faces
> That miss the many-splendoured thing!"

The path is chosen, and the time of preparation is ended. Here ends the first part of our study. But there are one or two points to be gathered up, which were intentionally passed over in order not to draw off attention from the central line of explanation.

First there is the question, both in the Baptism and in the Temptations, of the literal interpreta-

tion of the account. Our Western minds are so constituted that we feel unhappy if we are deprived of tangible, sensible data. We are tempted to feel that if the voice of God was not actually heard speaking in Aramaic to Christ, if there was not an actual rent in the vault of heaven, and an actual dove seen hovering over and settling on Christ, we have been defrauded of reality, the thing was not *really* true. Yet the very point of the Temptations, the very victory Christ won, was the assertion that the things of the spirit, spiritual experience are *more* real, not *less* real, than the things of sense.

When it came to telling the story, nothing was more natural than that Christ, in describing the whole experience at the Baptism and after, should clothe it in such imagery and symbols as the prophets had used in describing their own experiences. It is hard to think of Christ putting his experiences into the language of modern psychological analysis.

Then there is the perpetual question, about which I do not wish to say much, of the relation of temptation to the sinlessness of Christ. Now the main thing is that the early Church regarded the Temptation as real. The triumph for them lay, and rightly, not in the fact that he could not sin, but that he *did* not sin.

The fact is, we think still of sin as something material, like a soil or taint, inhering in a person.

But we are coming to think, indeed we are being forced to think, in terms of evolution.

And we are coming to see that sin, whether racial or individual, is essentially bound up with choice. The whole trend of evolution lies in the ever-increasing introduction of freedom, and choices made at first unconsciously, blindly, become, as the race ascends, more and more conscious and the moral element enters. Choice becomes significant in a new way. Those who wish to read along the modern line of Christian thought in this profoundly interesting and difficult subject are referred to the book by Mr McDowall mentioned in the Notes to Study VI. We have not space to discuss it fully here. But the point to be made now is that the Temptation means for Christ the possibility of choice. He could have chosen either of the two paths spoken of in the last Temptation. Otherwise the whole transaction is a mere stage-play, unreal and utterly valueless to us in our own spiritual history. Finally, it is hardly necessary to say much about the value of Christ's experience for us. That should speak for itself, if our interpretation is in any way true.

But it does seem more and more certain, as the history of man's development, especially the growth of religion, is studied, that a profound crisis in the spiritual history of the race was being reached. It was not so much that Christ was making new discoveries, as that he was affirming certain values, felt already by the prophets, in a new way, and was thereby entering on a new section, so to speak, of the spiritual

history of the race, which was to make possible new and undreamed-of developments along the new path. I think this will become clearer as the successive crises in the life of Christ are dealt with, leading up to the final crisis of the Cross.

SECOND DIVISION

THE FIRST STAGE OF THE MINISTRY AND THE FIRST CRISIS

VII

THE FIRST PERIOD OF THE MINISTRY

STUDY VII

PASSAGES FOR DAILY STUDY

Matt. 4 : 12-25 ; Mark 1 : 14-45 ; Matt. 5 : 20 ; Matt. 10.

NOTES

The leader should, if possible, have read carefully through Matt. 5-7, 10, with parts of the parallel passages in Mark and Luke. The nature of the discussion in our study precludes much detailed examination of the dates and places of Christ's ministry, but the student should follow Stevens and Burton's Harmony, or Huck's "Synopsis of the First Three Gospels"; Swete's outline of the ministry in the Introduction to his "Commentary on St Mark" is also admirable, the map being specially helpful. The aim of the study is to avoid too much discussion of irrelevant details, and to concentrate on the things suggested as central, especially the way in which the first period of the ministry naturally works up to a climax. Unless the historical conditions are clearly seen, the crisis is quite inexplicable.

QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by "righteousness" in Matt. 5 : 20? Connect this passage with the saying in 3 : 15.
2. What place do you consider the miracles had in the mind of Jesus?
3. What is the meaning of the saying in Matt. 10 : 23?
4. How far does an immediate expectation of the Kingdom seem to you to underlie the Sermon on the Mount?

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST PERIOD OF THE MINISTRY

It is not the object of this study to take up the life of Christ in detail, but to throw into relief the central things. Hence a great deal must be passed over in order that we may concentrate on the critical moments. In order to understand the meaning of the first crisis we must consider a few things that stand out in the first period of Christ's ministry.

First of all we must look a little more fully into what was implied by the inner conflict of the Temptations. This inner conflict plainly implies two divergent views of the Kingdom of God. We saw reflected in Christ's mind what we may call the popular view, largely based on the more material expectations drawn from the prophets and the apocalyptists, and a spiritual conception also drawn in part from the deeper element in the prophets. Of the latter we shall have more to say later, although some modern scholars are ready to deny the existence of this element entirely.

Here there arises the question suggested by certain rather difficult passages in the Gospels —whether Christ, during the first period of his work in Galilee, did not look for some possible way by which the two divergent views might

be reconciled. Or, to put it in another way, while Christ had absolutely rejected in the Temptation the principle which would deny the spiritual basis and nature of the Kingdom, it is possible that he did not see fully how complete was the divergence between the path on which he had firmly set his feet, and the path along which the majority of the people amongst whom he laboured, and his own disciples as well, were prepared to travel. It is this which leads up to and in a sense produces the first crisis.

Bearing this in mind, we can glance at the main features of the first period of Christ's work. It seems clearly established that Christ did not begin his ministry immediately after the Temptations. It was John the Baptist's message and ministry that had called him out of Nazareth, and had given the impulse to action, and it was the silencing of the Baptist's voice by imprisonment that gave the signal to Christ to take up the torch where his predecessor had let it fall, and to carry on the same message. There is no break; it was the sight of the publicans and harlots confessing their sins in the Jordan that had kindled Christ's hopes of what might be done, of what God was able to do, among His people, and the saying belongs to the outset of Christ's work, "I came not to call righteous persons but sinners." They were the people for the Kingdom. The addition "to repentance" spoils the direct connection of the saying with the expectation of the Kingdom which breathes

in it.[1] So we have the impression of a crowded breathless time, multitudes thronging to hear the new prophet and to see the works which he did, disciples chosen and trained, and then sent out to do the same work in the small towns and villages of Galilee.

The points which we must pick out for thought are three:

1. The main character of Christ's teaching is summed up in his own later phrase "the word of the Kingdom" or in the phrase of Mark "the good news of the Kingdom." It was first and foremost an announcement that the Kingdom so long desired was at hand. But we may also gather from the discourses which Matthew has brought together in what is called the Sermon on the Mount, that while the Kingdom is near, very near, and the other-worldly point of view is predominant throughout, yet the fundamental thing about the Kingdom is "righteousness." That word is the keynote of the early teaching of Christ on the Kingdom. It would take too long to discuss here the history and growth of the meaning of this pregnant word, and something must be taken for granted when we say that the fundamental idea of righteousness is God's character, what God is. The people who are to be in the Kingdom, to possess it,

[1] The words *εἰς μετάνοιαν* (Luke 5 : 32) are not found in Mark 2 : 17 and in Matt. 9 : 13, the main weight of manuscript evidence is against them. They clearly do not belong to the primitive tradition of the saying.

are the people who are like God. The behaviour of the sons of the Kingdom must be guided by God's way of acting—"be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful."

2. Without discussing here the philosophical and historical questions which are raised by the miracles of Christ, the point to be made is that, even should we reduce the miracles to the minimum admitted, e.g. in the Rev. J. M. Thompson's study of the miracles of Jesus, those cures of mental and nervous disorders which may be controlled by powers of suggestion or psychiatry, we are still able to mark Christ's own attitude towards his works of power. He regarded them, not in any way as signs intended to attract attention to himself, but as the exhibition of God's character; the removal of sin and the removal of the material consequences of sin were two sides of the same work, the work of God. This point also will come up again later.

3. Christ looked upon the calling of sinners, the preaching of the Kingdom, the healing of diseases, all as the preparation in the little circle round the Lake of Galilee for the immediate coming of the Kingdom. In the discourse which Matthew has assigned to the sending out of the Twelve, in chapter 10, we have a hard saying—10 : 23 "when they persecute you in one city, flee to the next, for verily I say to you, ye shall not have finished the cities of Israel until the Son of Man be come." The only way to take

this passage is at its face value. It shows that Christ expected, hoped, that before this journey on which he was sending his disciples out should be completed, the tribulations preceding the coming of the Kingdom would have begun, and he himself would have been manifested by God as the Messiah, the Ruler of the new Kingdom in the coming age. Hence we find the suggestion already made borne out, that Christ was hoping that the immediate setting up of the Kingdom on earth, and his own place in it, might still be compatible with the Kingdom of the poor in spirit, of righteousness and likeness to God, which he had set forth in his message.

This is, of course, an extremely summary sketch of the character of the first part of Christ's ministry, but its object is to make clear the fact which will be dwelt on more fully in our next chapter, that the first period works up to a climax whose extreme tension and pressure for the mind of Christ has hardly been realized in many studies of the life of Christ. We find Christ at this point in his ministry waiting with an intensity of expectation for what might happen that finds expression in the great utterances of that most difficult chapter in Matthew, the 11th. We shall deal with this crisis in our next chapter.

VIII

THE FIRST CRISIS. THE MESSAGE FROM JOHN

STUDY VIII

PASSAGES FOR DAILY STUDY

Matt. 11 : 1-19 ; Luke 7 : 18-35 ; 16 : 14-16.

NOTES

The parallel passages should be carefully compared. The Evangelists evidently found the sayings hard, and Luke, as he often does, has paraphrased some of them. The student must judge for himself, in the light of his reading of the whole situation, which most nearly represents the original. Possibly neither has preserved entirely the exact force of the Aramaic original. The leader may find some helpful suggestions as to the meaning of the Kingdom of God in Christ's time from Dalman's "Words of Jesus."

The historical situation is the main thing ; once that is grasped, it lights up much that is otherwise dark.

QUESTIONS

1. What elements of crisis do you find in the situation at the beginning of the 11th of Matthew ?
2. Can you find any connection between the Temptations and the episode in Matt. 11 : 2-6 ?
3. What do you think is the meaning of Christ's answer to the messengers of John ?
4. How do you understand Matt. 11 : 11-14 ?

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIRST CRISIS. THE MESSAGE FROM JOHN

It is Luke alone who keeps a touch of Christ's personal experience connecting the Temptation with his subsequent path. He says, and one hears an echo of Christ's voice in it, "the devil left him *for a season*." For the conflict begun in the desert solitude was to last until the Cross, but like all mental struggles it had its moments of crisis and climax.

The point to which we came at the end of the last chapter was such a moment. It was a moment of intense and eager expectation on the part of Christ. He had sent out the Twelve after due preparation, and in the 11th of Matthew we find him waiting in suspense for their return, and at the end of the chapter learning the result. How he accepted the result we shall see later. Now we have to realize upon what tensely strung cords the message of John the Baptist smote. Christ was waiting for the supreme mysterious moment of God's intervention, for the beginning of the tribulation, the sign of the end, and for the manifestation of the Son of Man. This was the psychological moment at which the messengers of John the Baptist reached him with their master's pathetic and despairing message, "Art thou the coming one, or do we await another?"

The force of the situation was extraordinary. We know from the words that follow later how Christ read the situation, how he regarded John the Baptist as the forerunner, the Elias of current expectation. But here was the forerunner lying helpless in Machaerus at the mercy of Herod's caprice, and yet God had not said a word. It is difficult for us to realize how keenly Christ felt the situation. John knew that Christ possessed power, and found it hard to understand why such power should leave him where he was. The only meaning of it could be that his intuition or spiritual experience at the Baptism was mistaken. Christ was not the coming One, and the Kingdom was not yet at hand.

All this and more Christ felt in the message. It was the temptation once more, "if thou be the Son of God." What more worthy use of his power could there be than to intervene on behalf of such a servant, to remove his doubts, to convince him that his expectations and his experiences had been true? Yet one sees at once, in the light of the first conflict, how the thing looked to Christ. It was the old temptation in a subtler form, appealing to the very affections and faith of Christ. With the sense strong upon him that God was about to intervene for him, the temptation must have been extreme, either to do something, or to say something so clear and decisive that John could no longer doubt.

But he stands firm. I cannot but think that

Matthew preserves the true spirit of the scene and the answer. Christ does not fill a crowded hour with miracles and then tell the astonished messengers to return to their master with a rebuke for his little faith. That would have run clean against the issue of the Temptation. John had heard from his disciples of Christ's works of power. When the messengers come they find Christ doing as was his wont, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom to those who most needed it, and using his power as occasion offered to remove such ills as he could. He says to the messengers in effect, "go and tell John that what I began doing when I came out I must go on doing. I can only do the will of God. But God's time is coming, let John's faith hold fast to that, and he will yet rejoice in God's intervention for him and for me." It was a sublime message of faith and yet of pathetic appeal. He could not, even at the risk of being misjudged by such a one as John, anticipate God's time, or step one hair's breadth out of the path that he had seen to be God's will for him.

So the messengers went. And then the emotion and tension found some relief in strange mysterious words, half passionate expectation and exaltation, half sadness and bitter irony. What did you go out to Jordan for, when that message of the Kingdom drew you? What did you expect to see? Some of you saw a deluded enthusiast, shaken with the wind of his

own passionate belief in a dream. Some of you were disappointed that the herald of the Kingdom of David and Solomon wore so mean an appearance and attire. The more sober and thoughtful of you gratefully accepted God's gift of prophecy, rekindled after long silence. But not one of you dreamed how glorious and great was the person you saw, for he was none other than the forerunner himself, Elias! The time of prophesying is over, the time for action has begun, God is bringing in the Kingdom. And just as you did not recognize in the sombre garb of the ascetic the glorious figure of Elias, so also have you no shadow of a thought that among you, reckoned less even than John, is one who is greater than Elias, the Messiah himself! So through enigmas and dark sayings breaks the flash of that intense expectation of the moment.

Then the key changes into the minor. But can the Kingdom come to such a generation? To them John is a madman, and I am the companion of publicans and sinners. That is all they see, how can the Kingdom come to them?

Then the quiet ending of faith, resolved to wait to the end for God—"wisdom is justified of her works." So the first part of the crisis passes over. The second and more intense phase of it has yet to come.

IX

THE FIRST CRISIS. THE YOKE OF THE KINGDOM

STUDY IX

Passages for Daily Study

Matt. 11 : 20-30 ; Luke 10 : 13-24.

Notes

A great deal turns on the significance for Christ of the return of the disciples from the mission already mentioned. The great passages in this week's study cannot be understood apart from this. Hence the importance of the incident should be very carefully thought out. One has to remember that much of the peculiar intensity of the situation would be very difficult to remember and record half a century later when the conditions had totally changed. Hence the extreme value of such passages as these, which still preserve that glow and passion of a moment whose meaning for Christ was very soon almost entirely lost by a later generation. If possible, it would be well for the student to try and think out the connection between Matt. 11 : 27 and the entire situation described in Matt. 11, before reading the chapter in this book dealing with the subject. The treatment offered here is an attempt to reinterpret along historical lines a passage that has always been taken in a somewhat different sense. But it is no way offered as a dogmatic statement, and each must find out for himself the inner meaning of what is perhaps the most deeply significant passage in the Gospels.

Questions

1. Do you consider that these passages point to a crisis in the spiritual experience of Christ ?
2. What is the connection between the external circumstances and the inner crisis ?
3. Do you consider that Matt. 11 : 20-30 contains any suggestion of a change of plan on Christ's part ?
4. What did Christ mean by " my yoke " ?

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST CRISIS. THE YOKE OF THE KINGDOM

In Luke we have an account of two missions apparently closely connected, the sending out of the Twelve in chapter 9 and that of the Seventy, or, as many ancient authorities have it, the Seventy-Two. To both of these accounts is added a charge which is evidently a shorter version of the charge in Matt. 10. It is possible that Luke had obtained from different sources varying accounts of the same mission, and has given both. However that may be, his account enables us to supplement Matthew in several important points. He places the great passage Matt. 11 : 25-30 immediately after the return of the mission, and also relates the spirit in which the disciples returned and the strange way in which Jesus answered them. These details help us to fill out the picture in Matt. 11. If we place the return of the mission after Matt. 11 : 19, where it falls more naturally than after verse 24, we shall have the situation before us which gave rise to the second phase of the crisis we are studying. We saw in Matt. 10 : 23, and in the opening section of chapter 11, the reflection of the tension and expectation with which Christ was awaiting the return of those he had sent out, or rather, was awaiting

the intervention of God and the ushering in of the Kingdom. The tension is increased by the pathetic message from John, and it is quite possible that during the absence of the disciples the news may have reached Christ of John's pitiful end.

Then the disciples come back, and nothing has happened. They are highly delighted at their own success in dealing with cases of demon-possession, but nothing else stirs the horizon, no sign of the Kingdom has broken upon them. So Christ, as ever, faces the fresh crisis, and realizes what it means. His expectation is disappointed. They have come back and yet the Kingdom has not come. John, the forerunner, is dead. Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum sleep complacently. There are three distinct sayings of Christ which belong to this crisis, and help us to penetrate a little into the secret of his mind. First of all, there is the saying in Luke 10 : 18-20, "I was watching Satan as lightning falling from heaven." That word seems to me to reflect both the heightened expectation before, and the revulsion of feeling following the return of the disciples. In some flash of summer lightning, it might be, his yearning for the coming of the Kingdom and the triumph of God had traced the fall of Satan from heaven. But nothing has happened; only the disciples are there, not understanding his mood, pleased at their own success, unaware utterly of the tragedy of the thing to him.

Then the disappointment overflows in bitter prophetic words of denunciation and woe upon these unmoved cities to which heaven had come so near, in whose streets the powers of the world to come had been seen. They had not repented, they had prevented the Kingdom from coming.

But last and deepest, there is the utterance of Matt. 11 : 25-30. If Luke is right, it is the utterance of exaltation, a strange and sudden transition from grief and disappointment. "In that hour Jesus *exulted in spirit* and said."

If it is so, it is the exultation of renewed victory. For once more, and sharper than ever, must the conflict have pressed upon him. This failure, this disappointment, John's death, the dullness and narrowness of those who followed him, the only result of the path that he had chosen in the conflict in the wilderness seemed to be futility and folly, hopeless failure. Surely such a result proved the choice wrong, he must acknowledge it, and strike out a new path.

Here Christ's faith and insight shine out. He sees that there is something so deep and so hard to overcome, that the old visions of the Kingdom as the prophets saw it, Israel's Kingdom, are receding, and his path begins to stand out apart, diverging from the old track, tending on to the unknown. His faith embraces the challenge of the situation, and he accepts it, not with dull resignation, but with splendid courage from the Father's hands. These limita-

tions accepted at the beginning, but now felt more clearly, are but the yoke of the Kingdom which he is to bear. The rabbis had the phrase for a proselyte, one who accepted the obligations of the Jewish faith, that he had taken the yoke of the Kingdom of heaven. Christ finds a deeper meaning in the familiar phrase. All this failure, this disaster, John's death, crushing as it must have seemed to him, became the very bands and cords of the yoke of the Kingdom; so the Kingdom shall come, not by the rejection of these limitations, but by the acceptance of them as the Father's good pleasure. He means to give the Kingdom to this handful of simple people who alone have had faith to follow. So be it, the Father's will is good—henceforth Christ will concentrate himself upon those to whom the Father has been pleased to reveal the secret hid from the wise and prudent.

Read in this light, that strange mysterious passage in verse 27 seems to spring naturally out of just such an intensely human struggle as the Temptation, and its connection with the historical situation already described becomes clear.

"Everything has been given me by my Father." In these words he accepts all the failure and disappointment of the bitter hour from the Father's hand. He realizes with the same faith and intensity as in childhood, but with the mature courage and open-eyed resolution of manhood, that "the yoke of the Kingdom" is being laid

upon him by the Father, that thus the Kingdom itself may be consummated.

"No one recognizes the Son except the Father." That divine secret, realized by him at the Baptism, is still unknown to others; Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, John the Baptist, the disciples, all so far have failed to recognize him. But it is enough for him that the Father recognizes him. His approval carries him on.

But if no one can recognize him as yet, then it follows that no one yet really knows God's secret, God's way of the Kingdom. "No one recognizes the Father except the Son." He feels that he is still alone, tragically alone, with his secret of what God's character and God's will are. All round him he sees men toiling and labouring in their various ways to bring about the Kingdom, while he, and he only, knows the true way of its coming. So his work is clear, if he knows he must teach those whom the Father has drawn after him, "And he to whomsoever the Son is pleased to reveal Him." He offers himself, the possessor of the secret of the Kingdom, the bearer of the yoke, to teach those who are willing to learn of him, how good and gracious a thing is this yoke of the spirit which can transform disappointment and bitterness into causes of hope and exultation.

Here the second stage of our study ends. It is Matthew who marks this first crisis more clearly than any of the other Synoptists. It is

the end of any hope that Christ may have had of a beginning of the Kingdom in Galilee and of the setting up of the Kingdom without his death. He turns now, as we shall see, to the small body of intimate disciples and followers, sets his face towards Jerusalem, and the Cross begins to loom out in the distance.

THIRD DIVISION

THE SECOND STAGE OF THE MINISTRY AND THE SECOND CRISIS

X

THE SECOND PERIOD OF THE MINISTRY

STUDY X

PASSAGES FOR DAILY STUDY

Matt. 12; 13 : 1-17, 58; Mark 3 : 20-35; Matt. 15 : 21-28.

NOTES

The order of events in this part of the ministry is even more difficult to reconstruct with any certainty. We can only gather the general features. The great thing to observe is that a change of method clearly appears, but no change of central plan. The "mission" method, if it may be so called, is abandoned, and the general plan is directed towards the special training and preparation of the disciples for a crisis which Christ saw would be inevitable. The parables are of special significance here, especially the Kingdom parables in the 13th of Matthew. We have not space to deal with them in detail, but the whole chapter should be very carefully studied in the light of Christ's fresh outlook on the future resulting from the first crisis.

QUESTIONS

1. What changes do you notice in the second stage of the Ministry?
2. What estimate did Christ's relatives form of him at this time, and why?
3. What is the meaning of Matt. 13 : 58?

CHAPTER X

THE SECOND PERIOD OF THE MINISTRY

It is well known, in spite of harmonies and other apparatus, that nothing is more difficult than to arrange the events of the life of Christ in a satisfactory historical sequence. Mark is without doubt a collection of episodes and sayings, with an account of the Passion quite out of proportion to the rest of the Gospel in its fulness and detail. Since the other two Synoptic Gospels are largely dependent on Mark for their narrative, we clearly have no certain tradition of the sequence of events. Hence any light on the internal significance of the life of Christ must help to some extent to bring the episodes into a definite grouping. Our principal object in this study is not to reconstruct the life of Christ in detail, but to find some inner principle which may help us to group the events of his life.

So far we have followed the clue which the first great experiences of Christ seemed to give us, and it has led to a general impression of the Galilean ministry and its underlying motive. Now the Galilean ministry has ended, in outward failure. But the same clue will lead us on to discover the general character of the second period of the ministry, even though we may not

be certain as to all the events and sayings belonging to it, or as to the exact order of the events.

With the definite closing up of the Galilean activities of Christ, there had opened before him, as the great passage of the crisis in Matt. 11 : 25-30 suggests, a vision of the next thing to be done.

He felt that it was now his work to concentrate upon the handful of followers who were the total result of the Galilean ministry. Christ saw, as Matt. 11 : 25 shows, that if the Kingdom was to come it must be by the few " babes " as he calls them—perhaps with an echo of Psalm 8 : 2 in his mind—who had begun to see, if only dimly, what was hidden from the religious leaders of the day.

Hence we shall find that the main character of the next period of the ministry, uncertain as it is in detail, contains the following certain factors: First, a journey, possibly a series of journeys, outside the limits of Israel, with various events (such as the story of the Syrophenician woman) that clearly fall into their place there. Second, a period of teaching by parables, a form of teaching which is immediately noted by the disciples as a change. Third, directly connected with this change of method in teaching, we find the record of a consistent and evidently deliberate attempt on the part of Christ to separate himself from the crowds, and to prevent any works which he did from becoming known, Matt. 12 : 16; 13 : 36; 14 : 13, 22, 23, and others. Lastly, in utterances which clearly belong to this period,

we find an attention, a concentration of interest upon the disciples which does not appear to the same extent earlier, e.g. the striking passage where Christ renounces the natural ties of his family and claims the disciples who in following him are doing the Father's will, as his only kindred, Matt. 12 : 50.

All these features have one main object, the training of the disciples. By taking them away from the unrest and busy days of Galilee, he had them alone. There was hardly any exercise of power during such journeys, as the story of the Syrophenician woman shows. There was probably not much teaching, perhaps questions and answers from time to time. But they were days of quiet, long marches with perhaps long intervals of rest for prayer and meditation. It may be that the teaching of the Lord's prayer, the prayer for the Father's Kingdom, belongs to this time, as Luke suggests, although Matthew has gathered it in with all the great Kingdom passages. They had time to watch him live, to see how he felt and acted in the ordinary circumstances of everyday life—in modern phrase, to study his reaction upon things.

The result of this time we shall see later. They got closer to him and he to them. It was a time of forming, the influence of personality upon personality. But it was also a time of stimulation, the bearing in upon them again and again of something new which they did not understand. The parables act in this way upon

them. They are forced to ask questions, and they begin to realize that there is a secret for them which is not for "them that are without," as Mark phrases it (Mark 4 : 11).

To use Christ's own pregnant word, they were, all unconsciously, being "discipled for the Kingdom of heaven," Matt. 13 : 52. This is the keynote of this period of the ministry of Christ. We shall give a chapter to the parables, because they offer some important problems, and also give us an insight into how Christ was thinking of the Kingdom at this time.

XI

THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

STUDY XI

Passages for Daily Study

Matt. 13 ; Mark 4 : 1-34 ; Luke 8 : 4-18.

Notes

It is necessary to consider carefully why the disciples were so struck by the parables. The parable had always been a familiar method of prophetic instruction, and Christ had probably used parables before, e.g. Matt. 7 : 24-27, if rightly assigned to the first period of the ministry. But evidently his method of teaching, or rather preaching, had clearly been such as the collection of discourses in Matt. 5-7 suggests, a straightforward announcement that the Kingdom was at hand, and the exposition of its spiritual character and the kind of people to whom it would belong. Now, however, the use of the word mystery here shows that the parable deals with the secret of the Kingdom. It shows that something had entered into Christ's view of the Kingdom which could not be understood by the mass of people, owing to their current views of the nature of the Kingdom and its coming. This is the point which needs most careful thought in this study.

Questions

1. What do you think was Christ's object in the parables ?
2. Why were the disciples surprised at this method of teaching ?
3. Do you consider that the order of the parables in Matt. 13 is original or not, and what light does the arrangement throw upon the author's method ?
4. What do you gather as to Christ's outlook on the Kingdom from the parables in Matt. 13 ?

CHAPTER XI

THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

The great group of parables in Matthew 13, concerning the Kingdom, might well have a book to themselves, rather than one poor chapter. But our purpose here as elsewhere is to deal broadly with the main things that stand in relation to the object of our study. The Synoptic Gospels all emphasize the change implied in the use of parables and the attention which it aroused in the disciples. In all probability the seven parables of the Kingdom in Matt. 13, the parable of the seed growing secretly in Mark 4, and perhaps some of the parables in Luke 14-16, belong to this period of teaching. The most important parable is the parable of the sower. In Mark Christ is recorded as saying to the disciples "Do ye not understand this parable, how then will ye understand all the parables?" Hence this parable must be taken as arising out of the immediate circumstances, and giving Christ's point of view on the situation. When one reads it with this in mind, it stands out at once as Christ's summing up of the results of the past months of work in Galilee, and his ground for hope in the future. The word of the Kingdom had been sown, but many causes, religious conservatism, want of stability and moral

earnestness, other interests, this-world interests as against the other-worldly message of Jesus, had combined to bring about the result already seen in the first crisis. The whole promise of harvest rested on the little patch of "good ground," those who in "an honest and good heart" had heard the word and kept it. They were the ground of Christ's faith.

Then following this parable, Matthew, no doubt of set purpose, has arranged six parables of the Kingdom in two parallel groups of three each. Three are spoken in public, and three in private alone with the disciples. It is difficult to say whether this really represents the actual order in which they were given. But it is more than probable that this arrangement represents a very definite contrast in the mind of Christ, and one which he wished to give the disciples in such a form that they would retain it for future thought, even though they did not understand it at the time. This contrast is between the outward failure of the Kingdom as Christ saw that it would, for a time, at least, appear to his disciples, and the inner secret which for the faith of Christ guaranteed the ultimate result, and constituted the motive for action under the difficulties of such a situation. The Parable of the Tares is plainly a parable of good work spoilt by the carelessness of those responsible. The servants can do nothing to remedy it, the only remedy lies in the final intervention of God. This was the great trial and test which Christ

now saw lying ahead of his disciples, when they would realize obstacles and difficulties in the way of the immediate coming of the Kingdom. At present and for some time to come, their attitude was one of very simple and childlike expectation of an immediate earthly Kingdom. Their hopes had been greatly strengthened by the revelation of the power entrusted to them during the mission. The death of John had no special significance for them, and we shall see later the contrast between their point of view and Christ's growing very marked. The parables of the leaven and the mustard seed re-enforce this point of view, I believe, in spite of current interpretation.

The last three parables, all peculiar to Matthew, have one thing in common. They all imply a standard of value which governs the action of those concerned. The ploughman, the pearl-merchant, the fisherman, each in his own way is governed and impelled to action by a secret of his own, a knowledge which he possesses, and which explains things that would else seem strange in his way of acting. The three parables all emphasize the saying which introduces the chapter, " blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear."

At the great crisis Jesus had acknowledged, not with bitterness or resentment, but accepting it as God's way, that the wise and prudent could not see, and that only a few simple folk had been enabled to see by the Father. It is now his

object, as we have seen, to develop this faculty, this gift in them. They are quite unaware as yet of its real meaning, of the importance of what they are daily seeing, things that prophets and wise men had longed to see and had not seen. This vision was to govern them and guide their course of action when the great test and crisis which Christ already foresaw, should come upon them.

So when the parables for the time being were ended, Christ asked them if they had understood. They thought they had, and said so. He knew that much had to happen yet before they really did understand, so he says in his own inimitable way, "therefore every scribe discipled to the Kingdom of heaven is like a householder, that brings out of his storehouse new things as well as old." When their discipleship was fulfilled they would see what he had meant. They would see that God had new things in store, making the old more wonderful than before.

XII

THE SECOND CRISIS. THE CONFESSION

STUDY XII

PASSAGES FOR DAILY STUDY

Matt. 16 : 13-20 ; Mark 8 : 27-30 ; Luke 9 : 18-21.

NOTES

It is necessary first to consider whether the form of the confession given in Mark is original or not. There the confession is simply a recognition of the Messiahship of Jesus. The position here adopted is that the addition given by Matthew is genuine and is borne out by the passage that follows immediately after. The significance of the addition must be carefully studied. The danger is that we may read back into this early stage in the disciples' development the meaning which the Church has come to give to the title "Son of God." The Old Testament use of the epithet, e.g. as applied to angels in Job 1, shows that such a meaning was not necessarily implied. Also if the line taken up in Matt. 11 : 27 be carried on into this passage, the connection becomes clear, and a powerful support for the genuineness of the passage is thus obtained. It is also important to think out why at this particular juncture Christ chose to do what he had never done before, that is, to make the disciples turn their minds in upon what they thought about him.

QUESTIONS

1. Is there any reason for naming this period in Christ's experience the Second Crisis ?
2. Consider the genuineness of the important addition made by Matthew in the account of this episode.
3. What did the expression "Son of the living God" mean as coming from Peter ?
4. How did Peter arrive at this position ?

CHAPTER XII

THE SECOND CRISIS. THE CONFESSION

The second crisis in the life of Christ is less conditioned by external circumstances than the first. It is possible that the death of John the Baptist helped to bring it about in the mind of Christ. But the determining causes are principally inward. One feels strongly that many of the early applications of Old Testament passages to Christ have their source in things which he said to himself. There are two striking cases of this in Matt. 8 : 17 ; 12 : 18-21, and another, which we shall speak of when we come to it, in Luke 22 : 37.

All three come from what are called the Servant passages in Isaiah, and two of them from the crowning passage in Isaiah 53. We have not space to discuss the interpretation of the Servant passages, but the suggestion here is that the mind of Christ had been gradually influenced by the point of view there put forward, and that after the disappointment of the first crisis, combined with John's death, he had come to believe that the work of the Servant in bringing the knowledge of God to the Gentile world involved some kind of supreme sacrifice, possibly death.

This working in his mind, together with the

belief still as strong as ever that the Kingdom was close at hand, caused a sense of the shortness of the time and a desire to test the results of the past months of training. He wished to know whether the disciples were ready for a further advance, and his own insight showed him when to put the test. Hence arise the conditions of what one may call the second crisis. The scene is at Cæsarea Philippi, away on the limits of Galilee, possibly at the end of one of the northern journeys before turning southward for the last journey up to Jerusalem.

It is very marked in the Synoptic Gospels that Christ hardly ever directs the attention of disciples to himself, save in the command to follow him. He does not tell them who he is, nor ask them what they think about him, and according to the Synoptic record, he constantly uses the baffling name of Son of Man in speaking of himself.

But now at last he feels the time has come to sound them, to find out how far they had travelled during the last few months, and whether they were ready to face a crisis with him. First he asked them a question which from him may have seemed strange and unusual to them. He asked them what people were saying about him. They told him what they had heard dropped here and there in chance conversations by the way. People knew that John the Baptist had been killed by Herod, and some thought that Jesus was John the Baptist

risen. Others thought that he was the forerunner of the Kingdom, Elijah; others saw in him the spirit of the old prophecy returned to Israel. These were the things men saw in Jesus from the outsiders' point of view.

Then he asked them, suddenly and abruptly, "and what do you say?" One can imagine a moment's tense silence. It was such a moment as might focus and crystallize, so to speak, all the fleeting impressions of the past months of intimate intercourse. They had to ask themselves possibly for the first time definitely, "who is he, why are we following him?" Peter came to it first, quick and impressionable, and yet practical, "The Messiah," nothing less than that. But was there more? Mark gives no more, but both Matthew and Luke add more, and Matthew is the fullest, "the Messiah, the Son of the living God." I do not think for myself that the addition is a later doctrinal one. Its form seems against such a supposition. Here I give my own point of view for what it is worth. The Messiah represented for Peter the official character, the position in the Kingdom which in his own mind he had assigned to the one he was following. But he had seen more, he had seen in Jesus such a character that, as he sought to express it in a word, there came to him the echo of Christ's own description of what the children of the Kingdom should be, "that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5 : 45). That was the character which

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he had seen in Jesus, the character of God lived out among men. It was not that Peter had reached intellectually a position of assent to the Nicene Creed, that he thought "thus of Trinity." He was still a Jew, a monotheist, who would have shrunk with horror from anything that denied the central principle of Judaism, "the Lord thy God is one God." But he had seen God in Christ, and said so. He had realized only dimly, as through a rift in the clouds the far off snow peaks are seen, that Christ was like God. It may not seem much, but it is really everything.

Only Matthew gives the answer of Christ to Peter, and the whole passage, like the great passage in Matt. 11, is full of light on the mind of Christ.

It seems to me as though Christ saw in Peter's words the pledge and promise of the harvest, that hundredfold of which the parable of the Sower spoke. It was as if the husbandman, visiting the bare brown field day after day, should see at last the first blade of green pushing up through the clods, and welcome it with joy that saw in it the harvest's "golden yield."

So Christ hails Peter's words with an outburst of joy. It was the moment of vindication. His choice has been vindicated by the Father. Here was one at last, who unforced, led by the same quiet way that Christ himself had passed along, had learnt the secret by the Spirit's way of living experience. Flesh and blood methods,

rejected by Christ at the Temptation, had not taught Peter the secret. He had learnt through seeing God in Christ lived out in the simple ways of common life. It was true that still in his mind there blazed the glorious vision of a coming Messiah, so that he could hardly realize the full significance of the unofficial addition, "Son of the living God," but it was there, spontaneous and unforced, and Christ welcomes it with a joy that we cannot realize. It was the living thread that joins the experience of the Baptism, "thou art My Beloved Son," to the experience of the confession "thou art the Son of the living God." Christ need no longer say, "no man recognizes the Son." Here at last was the kind of recognition which he had the faith and courage to wait for, through disappointment and outward failure. It was a crowning moment for Christ.

In our next study we shall take up the meaning of the much vexed words that follow.

XIII

THE SECOND CRISIS. THE CONFIRMATION

STUDY XIII

Passages for Daily Study

The same as for Study XII and in addition Deut. 32 : 4, 15, 18, 30, 31 ; Psalm 78 : 35 ; Isa. 22 : 22 ; 26 : 4.

Notes

This passage is of course a crux. Most modern scholars regard it as a later ecclesiastical addition. But this is largely due to failure to understand the thoroughly Jewish significance and associations of the expressions used. Even the much controverted "my assembly" becomes easy to understand, and no longer an anachronism, when put into its proper setting. When once we restore the utterances here recorded to their Jewish historical setting, then their real moral and spiritual value appears at once.

Questions

1. What is the meaning of Christ's answer to Peter's confession ?
2. Why does Christ change Peter's name here ?
3. What does the expression "my assembly" mean in the mind of Christ ?
4. What is meant by "the keys of the Kingdom of heaven" ?

CHAPTER XIII

THE SECOND CRISIS. THE CONFIRMATION

"And I, too, say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my assembly, and Hades' gates shall not prevail against it."

It is not easy for the Western mind to appreciate the significance that names always have had and have still for the Oriental. To know a man's real name is to have power over him, and a change of name is always an event of serious meaning. In the Old Testament we have many changes of name, and in nearly every case the change of name is associated with and stands for a crisis of some kind in the person's history.

In this passage, in a crisis of which we have been trying to understand the meaning, Christ changes Simon's name to Peter, or in Aramaic, Cephas. The first word in this perplexing passage that calls for remark is one that is only too easily passed over as an insignificant particle, the word "too," probably representing the emphatic position of the pronoun in Aramaic. It implies a distinct connection, a reply as it were, to the recognition that had awakened such a burst of joyful emotion in the mind of Christ. One might paraphrase its force somewhat in this manner—"You have recognized something in me, something that others have

not seen and cannot see, and I now too recognize in you by that very token something new and strange, so significant that I will mark it by changing your name."

There is something implied here that is easy to miss, and yet it rests upon the truth of human nature, it is psychologically true. To appreciate or recognize anything spiritual, or of value in the spiritual realm, there must be some common ground, some moral likeness. We have a well-known saying in the first epistle of John, "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is," that states this principle very simply. The writer's point of view is that one cannot see God as He really is unless one is morally like Him. So again Christ himself had already said, in laying down the first principles of the Kingdom, "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Here we have an example of this principle actually working itself out.

But to make this clear we must ask for a moment the meaning of the change of name. The well worn argument on the difference between πέτρος and πέτρα amounts to nothing, for in Aramaic it would disappear. Cephas simply means rock, of any kind or size. The real point is, what would be the significance of the epithet under such circumstances to a Jewish mind? The only way to get at it is to go back to the Old Testament associations of the name "Rock." The typical passages given for study in the weekly study will show at once that the title

"Rock" is one of the most interesting names of God. It is the name which, for the prophet's mind, marked the steadfastness and faithfulness of God in contrast with the change and apostasy of His people, those who had been entrusted with the mission of making His real character known in the world. Hence in Christ's mind, always travelling in the deepest channels of the prophet's thought, this change of name stood for something of immense importance. Whatever form in time the Kingdom might take—immediate, earthly Jewish, catastrophic—this was the great thing, that through the way God had marked out, a man had been brought to see God revealed in Christ, showing that the man himself had so far been made like God. Peter recognizes God's character in Christ, Christ replies by recognizing God's character in Peter, and marks it by that deeply significant name. Nor is that all. Peter was not to be the only one. He was, to use the metaphor of the harvest, just the first blade of corn to appear, the others would come as surely. Now the word "assembly" has not the associations that the word "church" has for us to-day. Like the epithet "rock," the word "assembly" had a very definite meaning for a Jewish mind. It was the word which represented the nation of Israel from a religious point of view. They were the Lord's assembly, bound by common ties of past history, present religious ceremonies, and a common future hope. From the prophet's point of view, as an assembly,

they had been marked out from the other nations for the definite object of showing the real character of God. "This people have I formed for myself, that they may shew forth my praise." But in the same way, from the prophet's point of view, the "assembly" of Israel had failed miserably in its purpose. "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles on your account" is the prophetic verdict.

But now Christ sees, resting upon a new foundation, a new community arising. It was, in his prophetic vision, a community of people possessing the real character of God, like God, so that he could speak of it as "his assembly" in contrast with the still existing historical "assembly" of Judaism that now stood self-condemned by its inability to recognize him. Death could not destroy the permanence of anything possessing God's character, hence death, under the figure of Sheol's gates, the gates of that gloomy underworld where the dead passed away from the presence of God and the sense of communion with Him, death could not touch this new assembly. Christ himself according to the flesh might die, but God's character wrought out in man was eternal. The spirit cannot die.

But all this is directly associated with Christ's vision of the Kingdom, and he goes on to say, "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever

thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Again we have to go back to the Old Testament for the true meaning of the metaphor. We associate it with the power to admit and exclude, and every one knows the rather ludicrous associations that have grown up round Peter and his keys.

But in Isa. 22 : 22, the passage from which the metaphor is taken, we can see that the thought is the administration of the power of the Kingdom. The new vizier, Eliakim, was to assume the administrative responsibility in the place of Shebna. The point that is in Christ's mind, evidently grown clearer since the crisis of the Temptation, is the connection between the power of the Kingdom, that is God's power, and the character needed to use it. Christ's delegation of the power is not to Peter personally, with any thought of primacy, but follows on the recognition of God's character in him as the pledge of an "assembly" of people also possessing that character. It is as though, at this crisis, Christ reached a mountain top, after travelling for a long time in the valley. From the summit he could now see the way before him. A number of things became clear. The spiritual methods chosen at the Temptation are vindicated, but also it has become increasingly clear that this spiritual way, vindicated by God, means a divergence of immense importance from the Jewish national hope of the Kingdom in the form

in which Christ knew it, and must to some extent have shared it. For the first time Christ speaks plainly of his death, and for the first time of resurrection. What this meant for Christ we must discuss later.

But in reaching this crisis, Christ has reached the point where God's way was sufficiently clear to him to set his mind at rest about the future of the Kingdom. The assembly, his assembly, would be built, and death could never overwhelm it.

XIV

THE TRANSFIGURATION

STUDY XIV

Passages for Daily Study

Matt. 17 : 1-13 ; Mark 9 : 1-13 ; Luke 9 : 28-36.

Notes

This study offers a good deal of difficulty, but the way in which we approached the Baptism and the Temptation will help us here. Again we have to remember the effect of transmission upon the story of such an experience. The suggestion here is that the experience is in the first place a spiritual experience of Christ's arising out of his own faith, and directly connected with his own sense of the value of Peter's confession for himself. In some way, perhaps through Christ's prayer, this experience was in part shared by the sleeping disciples, and profoundly impressed them. We have to consider its relation backward to the Confession and forward to the Resurrection. Also the significance of the disciples' question about Elias, and Christ's injunction to keep silence about the vision until after the Resurrection must be carefully considered.

Questions

1. Compare the circumstances of the Transfiguration Vision with those of the Baptism.
2. What is the meaning of Moses and Elias in the vision ?
3. What light does the question about Elias throw on the mind of the disciples ?
4. Why was silence as to the vision enjoined ?

CHAPTER XIV

THE TRANSFIGURATION

The passing of the second crisis brings us to the last period of Christ's life. The period which it closes leaves us with certain clear impressions. The disciples have so far advanced as to recognize Christ as the Messiah, and, what to Christ means more, to recognize his likeness to God, even if dimly and without any clear sense of what it meant. For Christ himself the way has so far become clear that he sees death at the end. The Kingdom cannot come without his death. He must lose his life to find it. And lastly Christ begins to leave his disciples behind. He passes into a region where they cannot follow him. The divergence between his mind and theirs becomes daily more marked, as we shall see.

But this last period opens with a very remarkable experience which seems very closely connected with what had taken place at Cæsarea Philippi. During the days that had elapsed between the confession and the vision on the Mount there must have been much thought in the disciples' minds concerning Christ's words to Peter. The closing words especially, emphasizing the nearness of the Kingdom, would have occupied a large place in their thoughts, while the darker side, the mention of death, remained unintelligible to them. Then, when a week had passed, Jesus chose Peter and two others,

James and John, to spend a night with him on some mountain. There Christ, as his custom was in times of crisis, fell to prayer, while Peter and his companions fell asleep. The precise significance of what happened on the mountain is not easy to understand. Christ himself called it a vision (ὅραμα). Perhaps in some such way as the experience at the Baptism was shared by John the Baptist, the disciples shared the experience of Christ on the mountain. There came to him, agonizing in the thought of death looming up before him, once more the sense of the Father's approval of his decision. Not only so, but there broke in upon him clothed in such a form as visions must necessarily take when spiritual things are embodied in earthly symbols, the sense of the fruit of death, the triumph of the spirit, the Father's answer to his yielding up of his life. Glorious and immortal, the fulfilment of the law and the prophets, he tastes the anticipation of the joy set before him which enabled him to endure the cross. In some way the vision pierced the sleep of the disciples, and they shared it, although how much belongs to Christ's experience, and how much to the form in which they were thinking of the Kingdom, it is impossible to say. We can gather clearly from the conversation that took place as they left the mountain, that what they had experienced there had confirmed their belief that Christ was the coming Messiah, the glorious heir of the Kingdom that they felt to be so near at hand.

But the experience conflicted with certain of their current thoughts about the Kingdom. If Christ, Jesus of Nazareth as they knew him, was really the Messiah of the law and the prophets, where was the forerunner, where was Elias whom the scribes had always maintained must come first? They raise the question, and Christ's answer shows how he had been thinking of the things that had happened. The series of events from the first crisis and onwards, as we have traced them, had profoundly influenced Christ's thoughts. He had told the multitudes during the time of suspense in Matt. 11, that John the Baptist was the forerunner, Elias, adding his challenge for the first time there, "he that hath ears to hear let him hear." Then the news of John's death had come.

Now we see that Christ had accepted this, although it ran wholly counter to Jewish expectation, as God's way. It was for the forerunner to prepare the way of the Lord. Hence if the forerunner's portion was death and darkness and tragic failure here, that must be the way of the Lord, the way Christ had already chosen for himself. So he tells the uncomprehending disciples that Elias had come, that he had not been recognized, and had been killed by the religious leaders of the day. "So," he adds, "shall the Son of Man suffer of them." The passage lets a flood of light in upon the way Christ had travelled. But all that the three disciples got out of it at present was the certainty

that John the Baptist was regarded as Elias by their Master. The idea of a Messiah who should die was simply incomprehensible to them as yet.

But the Transfiguration, like the parables, was an experience, perhaps the fruit of Christ's prayers, intended for the future. They did not understand the parables yet, nor did they understand what the Transfiguration meant. They seized what agreed with their own hopes, and let the rest go. So Christ tells them to be silent about the vision for the present. If they had noised it about it would have had just the opposite effect from that which it was intended to have. It was not meant for "a sign from heaven" such as Christ had already refused for himself at the Temptation. It was for the strengthening and confirmation of faith. The vision itself sprang out of Christ's faith and could have its proper value for the disciples only when they had learnt, at a later day, what that faith really was for themselves.

XV

THE RESURRECTION IN THE MIND OF CHRIST

STUDY XV

PASSAGES FOR DAILY STUDY

Matt. 16 : 21-29 ; 17 : 22-23 ; 20 : 17-19 ; Mark 8 : 31-38 ; 9 : 9, 30-32 ; 10 : 32-34 ; Luke 9 : 43-45 ; 18 : 31-34 ; II Cor. 4 : 13-14 ; Heb. 5 : 7-10.

NOTES

In this study the same difficulty faces us again in its deepest form. The Resurrection is not often approached from the side of Christ's experience. It is not even thought of as affecting Christ's human experience at all. Here we are to try to estimate the place of the Resurrection in this experience of Christ. It is to be considered here as a hope springing out of the faith of Christ. The business of the student is to see whether such a point of view does not bring these utterances of Christ in a new way into line with the whole current of Christ's experience as we have been tracing it out. The significance of such an attitude towards the Resurrection will appear later when we come to the end of our study.

QUESTIONS

1. Why does Christ make no mention of his death until after Peter's confession ?
2. How did the thought of the Resurrection arise in the mind of Christ ? (cf. Isa. 26 : 19 ; Dan. 12 : 2-3 ; Heb. 11 : 35).
3. Consider the difference between regarding Christ's attitude towards his Resurrection as faith, and as foreknowledge.
4. What is meant by "the same spirit of faith" in II Cor. 4 : 13 ?

CHAPTER XV

THE RESURRECTION IN THE MIND OF CHRIST

We saw that it was not until after Cæsarea Philippi that Jesus began to speak to his disciples of his death, and in nearly every case he adds the mysterious words—"and the third day rise again."

Here we face one of our fundamental questions. What does this utterance mean? We have again to deal with a difficulty that met us in discussing the temptation and the moment of self-revelation in Matt. 11 : 25-30. One feels, as with the Temptation, that if Christ knew certainly that death was for him a mere incident in a path, every detail of which was already known to him from eternity, and that he would rise again as a foregone conclusion, then death was not for Christ the supreme test of faith. It could not be to him what it is to us.

But, on the other hand, if the lines we have followed in trying to understand the mind of Christ have in any way given us a true presentment of Christ, then we may hope to find help here in looking at the position from the same point of view.

The question really is whether Christ's words about his Resurrection are the utterance of divine foreknowledge or the expression of a faith that went further than the most daring

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venture of faith yet known in the history of man's relations with God.

We have seen how Christ accepted the disappointment of the crisis in Matt. 11. Up to that point he had clearly expected that, as a result of his work—the preaching of the coming Kingdom and its true character, continuing John's preparatory message—the hearts of the people would be so stirred to repentance and readiness for the Kingdom that God would be able to intervene, and before the return of the disciples from their mission the end of the old order would have come.

The crisis came, and in the light of it and subsequent events Christ saw that he had to travel further and along a harder path. The significance of John's death had been borne in upon him. He began to see in the light of this tragic event, and perhaps following along the lines of the 53rd of Isaiah which the Jews had never understood in a Messianic sense, that the Kingdom could come only through his death. The suggestion is indeed worthy of consideration that Christ had begun to regard his death as in some way directly connected with the preliminary "woes" which in current belief must usher in the Kingdom, the "great tribulation" or πειρασμός of the early eschatology. He may have regarded his death as a means of escape for those who were to enter into the Kingdom.

But still the question remained for him of his own place in the Kingdom and its future.

Already the belief had grown up in Jewish circles that the righteous dead, the saints of old, and the martyrs were to rise again to share the blessings of the earthly kingdom. Christ laid hold of this belief with the same intensity of faith and insight that we have watched in him throughout his life, and saw that this must be God's way of vindication. Naturally the belief in the Resurrection took the form in which it was current at that time, but the underlying fact was that Christ laid hold of the moral necessity of God's intervention. He had already experienced this intervention vindicating his choice of the way of the Spirit, and now he sees that he must put God to a final test, the ultimate vindication. His resurrection should be the Parousia, the moment which brings in the Kingdom. He would enter into the Kingdom by the only way that lay open to John the Baptist and all the prophets who had trodden the path of faith. Various details may remain uncertain, the reason for the "three days," and other points. But the main thing stands out clear, and will come out still more strikingly as we study the mind of Christ during these last days of stress, that Christ's vision of the Resurrection was the vision of faith, the divinest faith that the world has known.

These last two chapters may be considered as a link between the experience of the second period of the ministry, and that last journey to Jerusalem which we are to study in the last division of our subject.

FOURTH DIVISION

THE FINAL CRISIS

XVI

THE WAY TO JERUSALEM. THE MIND OF THE DISCIPLES

STUDY XVI

Passages for Daily Study

Matt. 19 : 27-30 ; 20 : 20-28 ; Mark 9 : 33-37 ; 10 : 23-45 ; Luke 18 : 15-17, 34.

Notes

The object of this study is twofold. First, to bring out clearly the state of mind of the disciples during the last period of Christ's life. If this was the attitude of those who had been so close to Christ, and had had the opportunity of understanding his point of view, we can see in some measure what the popular mind must have been. Second, by contrast to throw into relief the way in which Christ was looking upon this last journey and its issue. One often hears about the stupidity and slowness and selfishness of the disciples. The real wonder would have been if they had been able to understand in the smallest degree the amazing faith and audacity of Christ's conception, so new and strange it was.

Questions

1. Why have we no mention of the strife among the disciples as to which should be the greatest until the last journey ?
2. What can be gathered as to the disciples' state of mind at this time from Matt. 16 : 22 ; 18 : 1 ; 19 : 27 ; 20 : 21 ?
3. Consider the meaning of the two parables in Matt. 18 : 21-35 ; 20 : 1-6 in relation to this attitude of mind.

CHAPTER XVI

THE WAY TO JERUSALEM. THE MIND OF THE DISCIPLES

The Synoptic narrative is clear that from Cæsarea Philippi the mind of Christ is turned towards Jerusalem. It would also appear that the journey up to Jerusalem begins from the point where they turn south again after reaching Cæsarea. There are many difficulties in detail, e.g. the question of a Perean ministry, in reconstructing the course of the journey, nor is it always easy to decide whether an incident or saying belongs to this last period. But fortunately the main point is clear—we can follow the mind of Christ in its increasing sense of crisis, and in the divergence from the disciples that now becomes very marked.

There is a striking saying in Luke which almost certainly belongs to this last period. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished" (12 : 50). If we compare it with the incident in Matt. 20 : 20-28, which also belongs to the last journey, it will serve to illustrate the subject with which we are dealing in this chapter, the way in which the disciples regarded this journey.

In our next chapter we shall take up the subject of Christ's own attitude towards what lay before him in Jerusalem. But first we have to examine

the passages which show what the disciples were thinking at this time. The confession at Cæsarea Philippi had served to bring before them all distinctly the question of Christ's Messiahship. No doubt they debated among themselves such questions as we saw were raised by the Transfiguration, the question of Elias and his relation to John the Baptist. But it is quite clear that Christ's repeated statements about his dying at Jerusalem and his rising again were a complete enigma to them. Such a point of view would not fit in at all with any of the current expectations of the Kingdom. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the Jews knew nothing of a dying Messiah. The only passage in a Jewish apocalypse in which such a thought occurs only shows how far removed was the point of view which Christ had now come to entertain. In this passage, after the Messianic kingdom has been set up and has lasted 400 years, the Messiah and his companions die, and all the world returns to primeval silence for seven days, then follows the final judgment. Even this idea stands quite alone, and is obviously totally different from any thought of the Messiah's death being necessary to introduce the Kingdom. The Targum of Jonathan on Isaiah which may represent a very ancient Jewish exegesis of Isaiah 53, also illustrates the same point. In this Targum, or Aramaic paraphrase of Isaiah 53, all the passages which speak of humiliation and suffering are most skilfully transferred to the chastisement

of Israel, or the punishment of their enemies; only the passages of glory are assigned to the Messiah.

Hence we can understand how hard it was for the disciples, when once they had accepted the belief that their Master was the Messiah, to find any place in their minds for the thought that Christ reiterates so often during this final journey.

In Matt. 16 : 22, after the very first mention of death and suffering, Peter rejects the thought as impossible, "God be good to thee, Lord, this thing cannot happen to thee." It was quite inconceivable to him. At times the attitude of Christ, almost menacing as it seemed to them, threw them into gloom and depression (Mark 10 : 32). But they quickly rallied, and it is not difficult for us to reconstruct their point of view. They believed in the visions of the prophets and apocalyptists, they believed in the very near approach of the Kingdom which they themselves had been sent out to preach. They felt that they had staked everything on the belief that Jesus was the Messiah, the future king of the new Kingdom. Hence their minds turn continually, and sometimes in a way that seems to us grotesque, to the material rewards which would be theirs. There is no need to minimize the effect upon them of the spiritual side of Christ's teaching, and of his life; that bore fruit later. But now, as the tension of expectation deepens, and they feel that this journey to Jerusalem

will end in the establishment of the promised Kingdom, they throw away resolutely everything that points in another direction, and concentrate upon the places and power that they will certainly have in a very short time. James and John feel that there is a danger of Peter's outshining them, and try to secure the best places at once. They wish to call down fire from heaven and consume the inhospitable Samaritans who will not receive their Master on his way to the throne. Even to the very end, to the Last Supper, as we shall see, this attitude of mind persisted. The events connected with the triumphal entry, as it is called, must have greatly stimulated their hopes.

It is necessary to grasp this point of view in order to appreciate fully the divergence and the contrast which the mind of Christ presents. This we shall take up in our next chapter.

XVII

THE WAY TO JERUSALEM. THE MIND OF CHRIST

STUDY XVII

PASSAGES FOR DAILY STUDY

As in Study XVI and also Luke 12 : 49-53 ; 13 : 22-35.

NOTES

The point of view in this study may offer some difficulty. But by a loyal acceptance of the human limitations in Christ's experience, we shall reach a far deeper conception of his extraordinary faith. The more the temporal element, the historical setting in Christ's life is seen, the more clearly will the eternal element appear in contrast. As many of Christ's sayings as possible should be read with this in view, especially those belonging to the later period of his life. The list given for study is only typical and by no means exhaustive. Too much care and thought cannot be given to the most important part of our study.

QUESTIONS

1. What light do the above passages throw on Christ's mind as he went up to Jerusalem ?
2. What reasons had Christ for expecting that his visit to Jerusalem would end in his death ?
3. Why should he speak of what lay before him as a baptism ?
4. Consider the meaning of the words "How am I straitened." Luke 12 : 50.

CHAPTER XVII

THE WAY TO JERUSALEM. THE MIND OF CHRIST

To reconstruct the mind of the disciples at this critical time is not difficult. Their attitude was a simple one, arising naturally from their environment. But when we try to pierce behind the fragmentary records, to recover something of what Christ was experiencing during this last journey, the task is far harder. Yet there are many sayings that will help us. But first we must ask some questions. Probably they will not all be answered, but it is no small gain to have learnt to ask questions. We have to ask why Christ thought his death was necessary, in spite of contemporary belief. We want to know, if possible, how far Christ saw before him the coming of the Kingdom, how soon and in what form he expected the Kingdom to come. These are not idle questions but questions which must be asked, and to which some kind of tentative answers must be found if we are to get back in any way to the real mind of Christ as he pushed on along this new and fateful path.

First of all, there are several things we can gather from the earliest passage in which Christ speaks plainly about his death, in the scene after the confession at Cæsarea. Christ saw there that the basis of the new assembly, recognized by

him as God's answer to his resolute adherence to the harder way of faith which he had chosen at the Temptation, was laid beyond the power of death to touch—Hades' gates should not overwhelm it. Further, his stern rebuke to Peter shows that he looked upon his death as "God's things," in contrast to Peter's expectation, "the things of men." His death, then, was in some way directly connected with God's way of the Kingdom. The words that follow show that he had come to think of losing one's life as the fundamental principle, the law of the Kingdom, so to speak. Whoever tried to keep his life would lose it, although he might gain the whole world, but whoever was willing to lose his life, in losing it would find it. Now clearly this expresses something of what Christ had already been experiencing, in yielding to the Father's will, and giving up the particular form of the Kingdom hope which he had held at first; he had found a better way, and now he interprets his experience as the way for those who would follow. We saw that outside events had been converging on this point. John's death and the failure of the first mission—all had helped to make clear for Christ the way which now seems to us almost a matter of course; we cannot easily realize that it was really a question of choice. Now in this passage the choice and the struggle it involved come out clearly. In the Temptation the kingdoms of the world had passed before the mind of Christ and had been

rejected; here again the vision of the world is reflected as in a lightning flash in that awful saying, "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his life?" There is expressed Christ's own experience, his horror of the abyss that lay on one side of his choice. For him life lay in the doing of the will of God, the rest was God's business. So we can gather, even if only in a dim way, that through external events, such as John's death, through the influence of that side of the prophetic teaching represented by Isa. 53, and by the gradual development of that line of thought which had begun at the Baptism, Christ had come to look upon his death as the will of God, as John's had been, and as part of God's plan for bringing in the Kingdom.

Then, as has already been suggested, Christ seems to have come to regard his death as accomplishing something. Of course the sayings in Matt. 20 : 28, "to give his life a ransom for many," and later at the supper, "this is my blood, the blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many, for the forgiveness of sins," Matt. 26 : 28, have received a wider interpretation in the light of subsequent history, as the Church perceived the fuller meaning of the death of Christ. But in trying to get at the meaning of such sayings in the mind of Christ we have to be careful not to bring in the later theological interpretations. We know that the thought of the great tribulation, the πειρασμός of the Lord's

Prayer, which is often found in Christ's sayings, was one of the fixed elements in the expectation of the Kingdom. Only a few, a remnant would come safely through this time of unparalleled trial. The prayer "lead us not into temptation," the exhortation, "pray that ye enter not into temptation," had a far more definite meaning than we can understand now. And Christ had come to think of his death as a ransom, a means of escape, for those who were destined to be his companions in the new age. While they were thinking how they might secure the best places, he was realizing daily more intensely that God's way was the way of service and of death. But none the less the Kingdom was near at hand. He would drink the new wine of the Kingdom with the very same companions who shared the Paschal meal with him. There were those who would not taste of death till they saw the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom. That generation would not pass till all was fulfilled. He did not know himself the day and the hour, but the Father knew, and he was at least certain of this, that immediately beyond the death whose shadow now lay dark upon his path there was the glory of the coming Kingdom.

But as to the details of the future Kingdom we have little but the outlines of the prophet's expectation, the gathering of the elect, the judgment of the nations, and the bliss of the righteous in the Father's Kingdom.

Another element in Christ's experience is

expressed in the saying already quoted from Luke 12 : 50, "how am I straitened till it be accomplished." The link of thought seems to be with the first Baptism, the lowly gate by which he had entered the narrow path of faith. Now he sees before him a second Baptism, a narrower gate to be entered by a more terrible act of choice, but which would finally liberate his cabined spirit. He would, he felt, break through into a larger sphere of action. This feeling of growing straitness is reflected in two incidents, recorded only by Mark, and omitted by the later Evangelists probably from reverential motives, in which Christ finds a difficulty, a hindrance in the exercise of his power, the healing of the man with the impediment in his speech, and the blind man (Mark 7 : 31-37 ; 8 : 22-26, cf. also Mark 6 : 5, 6). We shall find more light on this subject as we go on to deal with various incidents of the journey, but we have the main features so far of the landscape as Christ saw it. It is a country of descent, going down into a valley with towering walls of rock overhanging, growing darker and darker as the way gets narrower, and no outlet is visible. But there must be a way out, if God is God. That was the essential thing in Christ's mind. He was staking everything on the faithfulness of God.

XVIII

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

STUDY XVIII

PASSAGES FOR DAILY STUDY

Matt. 21 : 1-11 ; Mark 11 : 1-11 ; Luke 19 : 29-44 ; John 12 : 12-19.

NOTES

The subject offers both the opportunity and necessity for a careful piece of Synoptic study. The three Synoptic accounts should be carefully compared together and with the Johannine account. Note especially the varying versions of the cry of the disciples as they enter. Then the significance of the incident must be carefully considered. Was it premeditated, if so, why did Christ abandon his invariable habit of avoiding any form of public notice ?

Also consider carefully the significance of the connected incident of the cleansing of the Temple.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the effect of the entry upon the mind of the disciples ?
2. What do you gather was the original form of the disciples' cry as they entered ?
3. What significance had the incident for Christ himself ?
4. What relation had it to the external crisis in the life of Christ ?

CHAPTER XVIII

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

It would be easy to spend much time on the details of the journey to Jerusalem, and of the last week, as every detail becomes illuminating when the main line of thought is clear. But we must concentrate on certain episodes which throw light on the development of the external crisis or on the internal crisis in the mind of Christ. First there is the somewhat puzzling episode of Christ's entry into Jerusalem. Several things may be gathered from the story. Following Mark's account we have first the sending of the disciples to borrow the ass's colt. Christ apparently intended to make his entry in a public way. For reasons of his own he now for the first time abandons his habit of avoiding public notice. In the same account we have, not the great crowds of Matthew, but the band of followers announcing his entry in words which hail the Kingdom rather than the Messiah—"Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord (implying nothing definite), blessed be the coming Kingdom of our father David" (Mark 11 : 9-10).

According to Mark nothing happens on that day, but Christ spends the night with the Twelve at Bethany. Hence, apparently, the entry was an incident in itself, intended to draw attention to Christ. On the next day occurs the incident

of the fig tree, which we shall take up in the next chapter, and the cleansing of the Temple. According to Matthew, the entry had attracted the attention of the Temple authorities already. Now the daring attack upon the priest's most lucrative source of income, the system of temple exchange, not only attracts attention, but makes Christ a dangerous person in the eyes of the ruling class. It is a tragic thing to think of Christ looking once more upon the courts of that house, which he had come up to long ago with such dreams and such an intense sense of the child's joy in his Father's house. Now, while the Father's house is still the same intense reality to him, his maturer vision, disillusioned, sees it defiled by the lust and craft of those who represented God before the world.

So the entry was sufficiently striking to attract the attention of the authorities to Christ, to make the people in the streets ask who this was, and to raise the hopes of the small band of followers who had come up with him from Galilee to a high pitch, although it is possible that of these only the Twelve shared the secret of Christ's Messiahship. To the rest, as to the Jerusalem crowds, he was the prophet from Nazareth, possibly even Elias the forerunner, coming in the name of the Lord to announce the near approach of the Kingdom.

Then the cleansing of the Temple immediately following, whether premeditated like the entry, or an act of generous indignation, served

to rouse the cold and calculating anger of the priests, the Sadducees, the ruling class, a far more deadly anger than the theological hatred of the Pharisees.

By these two acts Christ must have felt that the die was cast, he had crossed his Rubicon, and could not retreat. He felt that the final crisis would come in a very short time, a matter of a few days or even hours. Hence he avoids Jerusalem at night until the Paschal night. There were instructions for his disciples, other reasons it may be, we cannot tell, but the pathetic story of Mary's alabaster box and the tragic significance which Jesus attached to that act of love shows how he felt the last shadow closing over him.

XIX

THE WITHERED FIG TREE

STUDY XIX

PASSAGES FOR DAILY STUDY

Matt. 21 : 18-22 ; Mark 11 : 12-14, 20-25.

NOTES

This incident, like the last, again calls for a little careful Synoptic study. The result of the comparison between Mark's earlier narrative and Matthew's should prove instructive. It is an interesting example of the way in which difficulties arise from misunderstanding. The great thing is to endeavour to reconstruct, from Mark, the original meaning of the incident as it stands related to what was passing in Christ's mind and in the mind of the disciples. It illustrates the great divergence between them. They were passionately clinging to the faintest signs of power that might reassure them as to Christ's ability to bring them through the crisis that they felt to be at hand. Christ was looking at the thing very differently. He saw that it was a case for a supreme act of faith ; more and more he saw that everything depended on God, and that the great thing needed in order that God might be able to work was the manifestation of God's character. He always connects the answer to prayer with the manifestation of God's character. So for him it is waste of time to pray while any sense of personal resentment remains in the mind.

QUESTIONS

1. What inferences may be drawn from a comparison of the records of this incident in Matthew and Mark respectively ?
2. What light does it throw upon the mind of Christ ?
3. What light does it throw upon the mind of the disciples ?
4. What does Christ mean by "this mountain" ?

CHAPTER XIX

THE WITHERED FIG TREE

On the day of the cleansing of the Temple there occurred an incident which has suffered in the telling from the want of understanding of those through whom the record has been handed down to us. The beginning of the misunderstanding is found in the Synoptic account itself as it passes from Mark to Matthew.

As we have the story in Mark, early in the morning on the way from Bethany to Jerusalem, Christ was hungry and, seeing a fig tree, went up to it in the hope of finding some of the small dried-up fruit of the previous year still adhering to the boughs. He found none, uttered the strange words which the disciples heard and noticed, and passed on his way. Then came the excitement of the day of cleansing the Temple, and in the darkness of evening they returned to Bethany. Passing by the same tree the next morning, they noticed that it had withered since the previous morning, and Peter, ever quick to seize the significance of signs, pointed it out to Christ. It is from Peter's words that we have taken our cue, and ever since the incident has been known as the cursing of the fig tree. In Matthew we find several significant changes. The remark "it was not the season of figs" has been dropped; instead of a day and night elapsing between the utterance of the words

and the discovery that the tree had withered, we are shown the fig tree shrivelling at once before the eyes of the astonished disciples, and the whole incident has assumed the character which has so distressed and puzzled commentators ever since.

The incident, with the remarkable saying of Christ to Peter which follows it in Mark, has been chosen as illustrating that side of Christ's experience which we are specially occupied with in this study. We have already seen the external events shaping the crisis for Christ. He had wept as he entered the city. There had come upon him a sense of the irrevocableness of the crisis. He felt that they did not, would not, recognize the time of their visitation. Jerusalem and the Temple were the centre of all the prophets' visions. No one had yet thought of a Kingdom of God of which Jerusalem would not be the centre and the seat of power. So the refusal of Jerusalem to recognize the Messiah is the great tragedy that oppressed the mind of Christ during these days. It is with this problem that he was wrestling as he passed along the way to and from Bethany. The things of the outward life, as so often for the prophet, were but symbols of the inner struggle. So the incident of the fig tree, slight in itself, is full of significance for Christ: the trifling disappointment merges into the more awful weight of sorrow and disappointment at the corrupt and hardened priesthood and blind people, the unconscious

tree becomes the symbol to the overwrought mind of Christ of the fruitless nation, and the words of mysterious presage and doom are pronounced, not upon the tree, but upon that of which the tree was the symbol. So Christ disburdens in utterance some of the weight upon his spirit, and passes on, while the disciples listen, knowing nothing of his mysterious struggle.

Then a day and a night pass and some cause which might have been perfectly natural and explicable brought about the rapid drooping and sickness of the tree. Peter calls attention to the state of the tree, and remarks that Christ had "cursed" it, a thoroughly Oriental way of regarding the matter. Evidently the disciples were feeling the tension of the situation; the cleansing of the Temple, like the triumphal entry, would have added to their expectations, and they were on the watch for every sign of miraculous power upon which to stay their hopes.

But the significance of the incident for Christ is very different. We have already seen how the simplicity with which from the beginning Christ realized the things of the Spirit had never left him, but had combined with the maturity of his powers to give decision of action flowing from clear insight. With this simplicity he sees things in a perspective where greatness and smallness are measured by other than worldly scales. Events that seem trivial are fraught for him with portent, with divine messages. The simplest happenings of

daily life are the expression of his Father's mind and will to him. So here, where Peter saw only a display of power which would be needed in dealing with a rebellious opposition, Jesus saw a touching proof that the Father was watching his path and knew his struggles. He accepted the withering of the fig tree as a confirmation of his faith and a sign of God's approval of the spirit with which he was facing the situation.

There are two distinct elements in the situation, both of which are missed by the usual way of approaching this incident as a "miracle of judgment."

First, Christ was feeling profoundly the barrier which the refusal of Jerusalem to recognize him raised in the way of the coming of the Kingdom. His death might avail to remove it, but as things stood he was facing this tremendous mountain mass, not only Jewish unbelief, but the whole world order, Rome and all the rest of it, behind the little Jewish state, all blocking his solitary way, his desperate way of faith. Who could move this mountain? God could, and the incident is seized upon by Christ as a sign of God's power at work for him, a confirmation of his faith that is full of precious comfort and refreshment.

Secondly, there is the personal element. He was being rejected personally, there was a personal hatred that he could see growing against him. The closing part of this memorable saying shows that already, before ever the Cross is reached,

that spirit that had said "be ye therefore merciful as your Father is merciful," and that breathed the prayer of forgiveness on the Cross itself, is meeting the personal hatred with forgiveness. Christ connects the working of God's power, which for him expressed itself in the unexpected withering of the fig tree, with a spirit of personal forgiveness which was for him the expression of God's character. So the incident throws strange and unexpected and pathetic light on the struggle of Christ's heroic soul, as he fares on into the shadow of the towering mass that blocks his path. "Have faith in God" is the attitude of his own spirit, "forgive" is the deepest feeling underlying the passion that had spent itself in that act of cleansing the Temple.

XX

THE LAST CRISIS. THE SUPPER AND AFTERWARDS

STUDY XX

PASSAGES FOR DAILY STUDY

Matt. 26 : 1-35 ; Mark 14 : 1-31 ; Luke 22 : 1-38 ; I Cor. 11 : 23-25.

NOTES

There is little to be said here except what will be found in the chapter. I have not said much about the Supper on purpose. It is principally what follows that brings out the final crisis now beginning in the mind of Christ. For the understanding of this the passage in Luke is of prime importance. It may be pointed out that each crisis as it comes is an advance. While the principles of the first struggle reappear, yet there is no mere repetition of the same conflict, but the original choice is tested again and again by fresh circumstances. Each time Christ is carried further into unknown country, so to speak, in his steadfast adherence to the will of God as he knows it. Now the final crisis brings him to a venture which staggers the mind to contemplate. We do not yet know, the Church has hardly begun to know, all that was involved in that supreme act of choice.

QUESTIONS

1. What may be gathered from the narratives of the Last Supper as to Christ's view of his own death in relation to the Kingdom of God ?
2. What was the state of the disciples' mind at this time ?
3. Consider the meaning of Christ's words in Luke 22 : 37, "the things concerning me have an end."
4. Consider the effect of Isaiah 53 upon the mind of Christ at this time.

CHAPTER XX

THE LAST CRISIS. THE SUPPER AND AFTERWARDS

Events now began to move quickly to the end. The priests met together to plan some way in which Jesus might be quietly removed. The great difficulty for them was to find an ostensible cause for a legal execution. Meanwhile Jesus felt that the end was close at hand. He had for some time before been aware of the mind of Judas. The last thing that he desired to arrange was an opportunity for keeping the Passover quietly with his disciples in Jerusalem. Jesus had friends in Jerusalem, and the story of the man bearing the pitcher of water points to some previous arrangement made by Jesus with one of his friends in the city, who had put his guest-chamber at the Master's disposal for his last supper. The secrecy of the arrangement shows the extreme danger to which Christ felt himself exposed in entering the city.

Then comes the Supper. It is immaterial for our purpose to discuss the exact day and date of the Last Supper, although it is clear that the Synoptic account is uncertain on the point. We are concerned only with what we may learn from the records of the mind of Christ on that memorable night. Luke, who seems to have had access to some special source of information

for the whole of the last scenes of Christ's life, here gives us a number of very important additional details relating to the conversation after the Supper, and one of the sayings of Christ, recorded only by Luke, takes us deeper into the experience of Christ at this supreme moment than anything else perhaps in the Gospels.

We have already spoken of Christ's thought of his death as a means of deliverance for those who were marked out to share the Kingdom with him, also of his sense of the extreme nearness of the Kingdom. These things are reflected especially in the words with which Christ gives the bread and the cup to the disciples. But it is the conversation which follows, as Luke gives it, which guides us to the heart of what Christ was now feeling.

All the Evangelists tell us of the heaviness and dismay that fell on Christ immediately after the Supper, when Judas had gone to do his hateful deed, and Christ knew that the moments were numbered. But only Luke of the Synoptists has preserved in these sayings which he gives us the rapid passing of the various emotions through the mind of Christ. We have again a picture of the old strife breaking out in the very last gloom—the disciples were quarrelling about places in the Kingdom. A wave of pity surged in the heart of Christ as he looked at them. All void of sympathy and understanding as they were, still dreaming of an earthly kingdom and material rewards, yet were they not the sole

companions of his struggles? They had been with him in his trials, his πειρασμοί. He promises them, as though humouring them like children, a share in whatever the Father had given him. But almost as he says it there rushes over him an overwhelming sense of loneliness, of change. It finds expression in those mysterious words which utterly baffled his disciples and have remained hidden to this day, perhaps. He began by reminding them of the first mission when both he and they were full of hope and expectation that the Kingdom lay just before them. He reminded them of the way in which they had been received, they had lacked nothing, so far had his name and their message availed. "Now," he tells them, "all is changed. In that crisis which is about to come upon you, you will be cast upon your own resources. If you have a purse take it, also your swords. If any of you has no sword let him part with his cloak to buy one." Then come the words of doom, the words which tell us, as nothing else can, the point which Christ had reached. "For I say unto you that that must yet be fulfilled which is written of me—'And he was numbered among the transgressors'—*for the things concerning me have an end.*"

Christ had begun his mission with a profound spiritual experience in which his relation to God and his relation to the Kingdom had been fully revealed to him. Upon the reality of this experience he had staked everything. An

increasing sense of the divergence between the nature of the Kingdom and the Messiah as it was revealed to him, and that which he found around him in the popular expectation and which must to some extent have influenced his own thoughts, had been growing on him through the experiences which we have been trying to follow. Now the influence of the 53rd of Isaiah upon his mind, of which we have already spoken, appears here as the final point of divergence is reached—Messiah numbered with the transgressors! What did such an unthinkable position imply? Christ himself saw clearly as he always did, and sums up in that terrible pregnant sentence, "the things concerning me have an end." At last he had come there, to the point of final surrender. He must give up all the hopes that the prophets had built up around the glowing picture of a reigning and triumphant Messiah. He had gradually been realizing how much would have to go, but now he sees it all. It is all at an end. He had seen the rejection and disappointment in Galilee, and accepted it from the Father's hand. He had heard of John's death, and seen that God did not intervene for him, and had drawn from that pitiful end the token, God's token for him, of what the Son of Man must suffer. Then he had seen in the crowded days of the last week the hopelessness of Jerusalem, the slayer of the prophets. It could not be that a prophet should perish out of Jerusalem. Now last of all, as Judas goes and

the last shades gather over him, he realizes what a Messiah executed as a criminal must mean for all patriotic hopes, all Jewish dreams of an earthly kingdom, Zion the joy of the whole earth, and all the rest of the gorgeous phantasies of the apocalyptists. He had to let it go, and what those words cost him as he said "the things concerning me have an end," we shall never know. Paul speaks of the self-emptying, the κενώσις of Christ, and theologians have discoursed learnedly thereon. I think that we get something of its real meaning here.

Once more Christ is forced out into solitude to fight the last fight in the agony of Gethsemane.

XXI

THE LAST CRISIS. GETHSEMANE

STUDY XXI

PASSAGES FOR DAILY STUDY

Matt. 26 : 36-46 ; Mark 14 : 32-42 ; Luke 22 : 39-46 ; Heb. 5 : 7, 8.

NOTES

The principal thing to be said here is that we are trying to confine ourselves to the meaning of Christ's experience from the historical point of view. The larger question of the spiritual and universal significance of it all will come up at the end.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the meaning of the vision in Luke 22 : 43 ?
2. Why does Christ speak here of the "cup" rather than the "baptism" ?
3. What is the force of the words which Mark uses to describe Christ's mental state at this point ?
4. Where does the central point of the whole conflict lie ?

CHAPTER XXI

THE LAST CRISIS. GETHSEMANE

In the garden, with a pathetic longing for some sympathy, Christ took the three who had been closest to his mind to share his vigil. His words to them show what he sought from them, "watch with me." Mark uses strong and unusual words to describe the tumult and oppression that now fell upon Christ's soul. The old landmarks were swept away with those words of which we spoke in our last chapter. It was still possible to withdraw, to step away quietly, to avoid the final trial. But he could not do that. So three times he faces the awful choice, shrinking from the cup, yet resolute to take it. He seeks some answer, some token from the Father to show him if there is any other way than this. According to Luke, the answer is a vision such as he had already experienced in previous crises. It is a vision of strength for the end, not a revelation of any alternative issue.

If we have, in our previous study of the point now reached by Christ, in any way followed the true line of his advance, we must realize a little the intense agony of the struggle here. At the Temptations the issue was seen dimly, at a distance. Here it is right before him, overshadowing all with its horror. He must, if he chooses the cup—that well-known prophetic figure of divine wrath—go forward into darkness.

He must accept, as the final consequence of the nation's failure to perceive the time of their visitation, the shattering of his own cherished hopes for them and for Jerusalem. He must go out like a criminal, "numbered with the transgressors." The horror of the tribulation must be his alone, with no knowledge of what might come after. The agony of Christ's spirit is for ever stamped upon the Gospel records.

In this study, as in the previous and the following one, we are dealing with a subject whose issues lie in the spiritual, as well as in the historical plane. We are endeavouring to estimate it from the historical standpoint first, in order that we may more truly estimate its meaning on the spiritual plane. Hence the deliberate avoidance in these three studies of any discussion of the larger questions that naturally arose later, when the Church began to solve for itself the question who Christ was and what he had done.

XXII

THE CROSS

STUDY XXII

PASSAGES FOR DAILY STUDY

Matt. 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, John 19.

NOTES

In attempting to study the Cross and its meaning from the historical point of view, the student will find great help from a pamphlet by T. R. Glover entitled "The Death of Christ," and also from Canon Streeter's article "The Historic Christ" in "Foundations." I have said very little here, because all the implications of the Cross and its relation to Christ's actual experience have already been gradually worked out. The Cross is just the final crisis, the narrow door, by which Christ himself broke through into the newness of life that Paul speaks of, the Kingdom of the Spirit.

QUESTIONS

1. Compare the cry on the Cross in Mark 15 : 34 with that given in John 19 : 30.
2. What is implied by the bystander's remarks about Elias in Mark 15 : 36 ?
3. Consider the meaning of Christ's last words as given in Luke 23 : 46.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CROSS

We come now to the Cross. One is likely to read the familiar story transfigured by the golden haze, so to speak, of the victory. But the poet's words are true—

> "Brightness may emanate in heaven from thee,
> Here thy dread symbol only shadow yields."

Stripped of the glamour, it is the story of a sordid judicial crime carried out with mean and petty cruelty to its miserable end. There is no brightness on the historical side, only gloom. The darkness into which Christ entered in the garden grows more intense, until the cry of anguish wrung from him on the Cross tells us that the final agony, not of the body but of the mind, is upon him. The cry shows that still through the mockery of the trial, the heartless jibes of the priests at his supposed Messiahship, even the half-suppressed doubt and suspense of the bystanders as to whether Elias may yet come and turn the darkness into light, he clung to the possibility that God might intervene in some way. Although his will had bowed to the cup, yet his heart clung to a hope that light might break at the last moment.

Now his strength is waning, no sign appears in the darkening sky. He feels that this is the end, and the passionate cry of broken-hearted dis-

appointment breaks from him, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The word given in John is generally taken as the word of triumph, the expression of the sense of completion. But I cannot help feeling that the τετέλεσται has been reinterpreted, like so much else in the story from the point of view of the later history. It really stands for the final surrender, the completion, it is true, of the act of self-emptying, the answer, as it were, to that other utterance, "the things concerning me have an end," τετέλεσται—"It is all over." If that were the last word it would be strange. But the true note of triumph does not fail. The note that was struck in Matt. 11 : 25 is heard once more, and is the prelude to the Easter song, the token that the Cross is not the end, but the beginning. After the cry of anguish has been uttered, and the supreme moment of conflict has passed, the words come, apparently with a force and strength that astonished the onlookers, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." That is the true cry of victory. Christ accepts the issue of the Cross, with all its finality and irrevocableness on the one side, as the way into the infinite possibilities that the Father might have on the other side. It might be resurrection, it must be vindication. The child who found his home in the Father's house now entrusts his spirit, having done all, to the Father's hands in faith. The rest is with the Father.

XXIII

THE VICTORY OF THE CROSS

STUDY XXIII

PASSAGES FOR DAILY STUDY

I Peter 1 : 18-21 ; 2 : 21-25 ; 3 : 18 ; Rom. 6 : 9, 10 ; II Cor. 13 : 4 ; Gal. 2 : 20.

NOTES

There are a great many questions deliberately left untouched in summing up. The object is that we may concentrate and see clearly the historical relation between the development of the idea of the Kingdom in the Hebrew prophets, and the actual life and death of Christ as the climax of this process of development. We have to see Christ, not as a *deus ex machina*, intervening to fulfil the prophets' predictions, but as the heir and successor of the prophets' experiences and traditions, himself involved in the final tragedy, working out God's purpose through infinite pain and sacrifice.

QUESTIONS

1. What aspects of the death of Christ did the early Church seize upon ?
2. Consider the effect of the death of Christ upon the Jewish order of things.
3. Consider the meaning of St. Peter's words "Christ died to bring us to God," from the historical point of view.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE VICTORY OF THE CROSS

The author of the 1st epistle of Peter went to the root of the matter when he said "Christ died to bring us to God." Apart from all theological considerations that sentence expresses the experience of a multitude "that no man can number." Paul puts it in another way when he says "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself."

That is now, at the end of our study, the question for us. What did Peter, what did Paul mean when they said these things? Can the death of Christ have the same meaning for us in our modern world?

Now it is a fact that our theology was for the most part made a very long time ago. The statements which to-day represent authoritatively the Church's belief about the Person of Christ took the form in which we know them, nearly fifteen centuries ago. Much of the teaching about sin, the nature of God, and the effect of Christ's death in relation to both, rests upon the scholastic theology of the Middle Ages.

The fact that a thing is old does not imply that it cannot be good, and indeed the persistence and vitality of the creeds and of the Church's theology shows that underneath it all lies a firm basis of real experience. But on the other hand the whole witness of the history of religion cries

aloud that God moves, that His way is to go on to ever fresh ways of unfolding His eternal life in the world. Christianity itself stands as the perpetual witness of the resistless movement of the life of God in history. If Christianity should itself prove false to the very *élan vital*, the vital impulse that gave it birth, it must be left behind.

So at a time like this, when the cumulative effect of nearly a century of extraordinary change is beginning to be consciously felt, the best discipline is to go back to the historical facts that surround the birth of Christianity and read them anew in the light of fresh historical knowledge, fresh insight into personality and religious psychology, and a fresh perspective gained from the study of comparative religion.

Our study has been a mere essay, the slightest sketch of such a survey. But it has at least given us a point of view. We have seen in what a strange and tragic sense Christ was the heir of the long prophetic line. Prophecy, although not peculiar to Israel, yet had a unique history and development among the Hebrew people. While the Greeks, moving along their own characteristic line of development, produced from the infinite multiplicity of tribal sanctities, year-demons, earth and corn spirits, and what not, the resplendent figures of the Olympians, an eternal joy to the senses—the Hebrew prophets were travailing in birth through the pangs of the catastrophes that overwhelmed their nation, to bring forth the loftiest conception of

God as ethical and spiritual beyond all sense-representation.

There were three great things that marked the work of the prophets. They carried the conception of God as a spiritual being to the full development of the thought of Him as the Father, not only of the people of Israel, but of the individual. They carried their conception of God as holy and righteous into national and individual ethics, and made the synthesis of religion and ethics possible. But what was most characteristic of their work was their conception of a state of things, a kingdom, in which the character of God and His relation to His people would be fully vindicated in the world. They thought of God as intervening to bring this desirable state, this age to come, into being. These three elements cannot be separated, and we are only now beginning to understand how profoundly the last of the three gathered up and embodied the others and became the central and vital thing in Jewish life and thought at the time when Christ lived. Now all three were essentially Jewish, as they found expression in the period we have been studying. For Paul to be able even to ask the question, "Is God the God of the Jews only, is He not also the God of the Gentiles?" marked an advance whose cost and secret is the very subject of our study. In Christ's time and in his environment God was exclusively the God of the Jews. To enjoy the blessings of God's favour it was necessary for

a Gentile to become a member of the commonwealth of Israel. To enjoy the future Kingdom that seemed so near at hand it was necessary to be a Jew. Paul expresses the logical point of view of a Jew towards the Gentiles among whom he lived when he reminds the Ephesians that before they became Christians they were strangers from the polity of Israel, that at best they could only be tolerated sojourners under the covenants of the promise of the Jew, that they had no hope, and were without anything that could really be called God. How was the change, even in the point of view, made possible? How could Paul come even to think otherwise? Again we come back to Christ. God's thoughts are His acts. In Christ we have found this movement of liberation wrought out in the infinite travail of a human experience. We have seen Christ gathering up in one personality of unique moral simplicity, purity, and intensity, these three great prophetic things. The Fatherhood of God was not new. It was what Christ made of it in his own experience that was new. Christ's ethics were the ethics of the prophets, but the spirit, the motive behind the ethics, was new and revolutionary. Yet Christ's horizon is Jewish, his mission is only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. His thoughts of the Kingdom and the Messiah, although differing widely from those generally held in his time, were still Jewish. He loved Jerusalem, he loved the Temple, passionately. His love for Israel was such as

found an echo in the words of his greatest follower when he said, "I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

Yet we see him forced by his own unfaltering choice and vision of the will of God to a point where he must give the alabaster box to be broken, that the treasure might be liberated. In no other way, seemingly, could the spirit that had so far wrought in the history of prophecy be set free from the Jewish environment and expression. We see God, cabined and cribbed, as it were, within the narrow bounds of Judaism liberated by His own act in Christ by what seemed the final tragedy of the Cross. It was the end of Jewish national hopes, it was the end of prophetic pictures of the Jewish Messiah, it was in the deepest sense the losing of life, far more than mere physical death. That was the side of the Cross that Christ faced, as we have watched him through the successive crises of his life approach it.

But it was the beginning of the new creation, where the "spirit of Jesus," liberated from the womb of Judaism, was free to work the miracle, the "greater things," that the world saw with amazement during the first century of Christianity.

That is the victory of the Cross looked at in the broadest way. There is much more, but some of it lies outside such a study as this altogether, and some of it belongs to a book

that will follow this and take up the Resurrection and its consequences.

But the great point is that the Cross itself *is* the victory. All the significance of the Resurrection, however we regard it, is drawn from the Cross.

There Christ lost his life and found it. There God slowly working through the ages, through the travail of man's spirit, at last in Christ found an instrument in which He could perfectly express Himself even under full and true human and historical conditions. And in dying, God in Christ entered into the world's pangs in a new way, so that we may never again think of God merely enthroned above between the cherubim. Henceforth we see God in the self-emptying of Christ on the Cross, we see God under the weight of national and individual sin, suffering its consequences, in no mere official and unreal sense, but really losing everything. We think of God in a new way, and see that Christ did die to bring us to God. We find God there.

Epilogue

"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

"Thus hath He unto death His beauty given :
And so of all which form inheriteth
The fall doth pass the rise in worth ;

For birth hath in itself the germ of death
But death hath in itself the germ of birth.

It is the falling acorn buds the tree,
The falling grain that bears the greenery,
The fern plants moulder when the ferns arise.
For there is nothing lives but something dies,
And there is nothing dies but something lives.
Till skies be fugitives,
Till Time, the hidden root of change, updries,
Are Birth and Death inseparable on earth ;
For they are twain yet one, and Death is Birth."

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THE APOCALYPTIC MESSIAH

THE following passages are selected from the Jewish Apocalyptic literature of the last century B.C. and the first century A.D. as illustrating the nature of current Messianic expectations :

(*a*) Parables of Enoch (1 Enoch 37-71), *circ.* 90-60 B.C.

" On that day mine Elect One shall sit on the throne of glory
And shall try their works,
And their places of rest shall be innumerable.
And their souls shall grow strong within them when they see mine Elect ones,
And those who have called upon my Glorious Name :
Then will I cause mine Elect One to dwell among them.
And I will transform the heaven and make it an eternal blessing and light :
And I will transform the earth and make it a blessing." (1 Enoch 45 : 3, 4.)

" And there I saw One who had a head of days,
And his head was white like wool,
And with him was another being whose countenance had the appearance of a man,
And his face was full of graciousness, like one of the holy angels.

And I asked the angel who went with me and showed me all the hidden things, concerning that Son of Man who he was, and whence he was, and why he went with the Head of Days? And he answered and said unto me:

This is the Son of Man who hath righteousness,
With whom dwelleth righteousness,
And who revealeth all the treasures of that which is hidden,
Because the Lord of Spirits had chosen him, . . .
And this Son of Man whom thou hast seen
Shall put down the kings and mighty from their seats, etc." (1 Enoch 46 : 1-4.)

" And at that hour the Son of Man was named
In the presence of the Lord of Spirits,
And his name before the Head of Days.
Yea, before the sun and the signs were created,
Before the stars of the heaven were made,
His name was named before the Lord of Spirits."
(1 Enoch 48 : 23.)

" And they shall be downcast of countenance,
And pain shall seize them,
When they see that Son of Man
Sitting on the throne of his glory.
And the kings and the mighty and all who possess the earth
Shall bless and exalt and glorify him who rules over all,
Who was hidden.

For from the beginning the Son of Man was
hidden,
And the Most High preserved him in the
presence of his might,
And revealed him to the elect."
(1 Enoch 62 : 5-7.)

(*b*) 2 Baruch (*circ.* A.D. 50-100).

"And it shall come to pass after these things, when the time of the advent of the Messiah is fulfilled, that he shall return in glory. Then all who have fallen asleep in hope of him shall rise again." (2 Bar. 30 : 1, 2.)

"And it will come to pass when the time of its consummation that it should fall has approached, then the principate of my Messiah will be revealed, which is like the fountain and the vine, and when it is revealed, it will root out the multitude of its host. The last leader of that time will be left alive, when the multitude of his hosts will be put to the sword, and he will be bound, and they will take him up to Mt. Zion, and my Messiah will convict him of all his impieties, and will gather and set before him all the works of his hosts. And afterwards he will put him to death and protect the rest of my people which shall be found in the place which I have chosen. And his principate will stand for ever until the world of corruption is at an end." (2 Bar. 39 : 7—40 : 3.)

(*c*) 4 Ezra (*circ.* A.D. 60-100).

"For behold the days come and it shall be when the signs which I have foretold unto thee come to pass, then shall the city that is now invisible appear, and the land which is now concealed be seen. And whosoever is delivered from the predicted evils, the same shall see my wonders. For my Son the Messiah shall be revealed, together with those who are with him, and shall rejoice the survivors four hundred years. And it shall be, after these years, that my Son the Messiah shall die, and all in whom there is human breath. Then shall the world be turned into the primæval silence seven days, like as at the first beginnings, so that no man is left."

(4 Ezra 7 : 26-30.)

"And as for the lion whom thou didst see roused from the wood and roaring and speaking to the eagle and reproving him for his unrighteousness and all his deeds, as thou hast heard. This is the Messiah, whom the Most High has kept unto the end of the days, who shall spring from the seed of David, and shall come and speak unto them . . . at the first he shall set them alive for judgment; and when he hath rebuked them he shall destroy them."

(4 Ezra 12 : 31-33.)

"And it came to pass after seven days that I dreamed a dream by night; and I beheld, and lo! there arose a violent wind from the sea, and

stirred all its waves. And I beheld and lo! the wind caused to come up out of the heart of the seas as it were the form of a man. And I beheld, and lo! this Man flew with the clouds of heaven. And whenever he turned his countenance to look everything seen by him trembled; and whithersoever the voice went out of his mouth all that heard his voice melted away, as the wax melts when it feels the fire. And after this I beheld, and lo! there was gathered together from the four winds of heaven an innumerable multitude of men to make war against the Man that came up out of the sea. And I beheld and lo! he cut out for himself a great mountain and flew up upon it. . . . And lo! when he saw the assault of the multitude as they came, he neither lifted his hand nor held spear nor any warlike weapon; but I saw only how he sent out of his mouth as it were a fiery stream, and out of his lips a flaming breath, and out of his tongue he shot forth a storm of sparks. And these were all mingled together—the fiery stream, the flaming breath, and the storm, and fell upon the assault of the multitude which was prepared to fight and burned them all up."

(4 Ezra 13 : 1-11.)

"And I said: O Lord my Lord show me this: wherefore I have seen the Man coming up from the heart of the sea. And he said unto me: Just as one can neither seek out nor know what is in the deep of the sea, even so can no one upon

earth see My Son or those that are with him, but in the time of his day."

(4 Ezra 13 : 51-52.)

(The above passages may be found in their context in Vol. II. of the Oxford Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the O.T. ed. Charles.)

APPENDIX B

THE TITLE "SON OF MAN"

THE occurrence of this title in the Gospels raises several closely related and fundamental problems :

(i) What is the history and exact significance of this title ?

(ii) Did Jesus use this title of himself ?

(iii) If he did, what significance did he attach to it, and what significance would it convey to others ?

(iv) Why is the title apparently unknown to Paul ?

The answers to these questions can only be given in very brief outline, and with the reservation that no problem in early Christian thought is so perplexing or so uncertain of solution. References to the more recent literature on the subject are given below.

(i) The following points are fairly certain :

(*a*) In the O.T. passages, even in the apocalyptic passage in Daniel 7 : 14, both Hebrew and Aramaic simply denote "man" or "mankind" in general. The passage in Daniel may not seem to bear this out, but if it is carefully examined it will be seen that the parallelism is clear. The beasts representing the great Gentile empires stand in opposition to the human

figure representing "the people of the saints of the Most High."

(*b*) In the Jewish apocalyptic literature, particularly in the Similitudes of Enoch, it is certain that the title "Son of Man" has become attached to a supernatural figure who is also described as Messiah, Lord of Spirits, Judge, The Elect One, and so forth.

The particular form in which this title may have been current in Aramaic or Greek-speaking circles in the time of Jesus is quite uncertain.

(*c*) In current Aramaic, particularly in the Galilean dialect of that language, the expression "Son of Man" is common as the equivalent of the indefinite pronoun נש.

(*d*) In early Christian circles the title has become a Messianic one attached to Jesus, attributed to him as a frequent form of self-designation, and connoting the attributes of the supernatural figure of the Similitudes of Enoch, with the addition of suffering and resurrection.

(*e*) In sub-apostolic literature the title disappears, to reappear later with new theological implications, the old apocalyptic associations being wholly lost.

Hence the history of the meaning shows four distinct possible ways in which the title might be understood at different stages of its develop-

ment. It might mean merely "man"; it might denote the late Jewish idea of a supernatural Messiah as distinct from the Davidic Messiah; it might denote the Jewish-Christian combination of the historic Jesus who died and rose with the supernatural Messiah who was to come with clouds; and finally, it might denote the representative man, the new Adam, restoring and redeeming the race.

(ii) As to the second question, whether Jesus used the title of himself, it is important to distinguish between what is certain and what is not.

(*a*) It is as certain as anything can be with our present knowledge of the records that Jesus did use the title in connection with the supernatural figure of the one who was to be Judge and inaugurator of the New Age.

(*b*) It is also certain that the writers of the Gospels believed that Jesus used the title of himself in this sense.

(*c*) But it is not certain that he really did ever use the title unambiguously of himself. The dilemma is this. It is clear from the Gospels that Jesus was anxious to avoid any public recognition or acclamation of himself as Messiah. Hence if the title has Messianic significance it is difficult to accept his early use of it to describe himself, his Messianic claims would have been matter of public knowledge at once.

And on the other hand, if it is not Messianic it is difficult to understand his undoubted use of it in passages referring to the future coming with power.

(*d*) The writer's position is that this undoubted ambiguity in the Gospels represents an ambiguity in the mind of Jesus, that he did use the expression of himself and in a Messianic sense, but with deliberate ambiguity until, as he believed, the course of events should remove all ambiguity and make all things clear.

(iii) With regard to the meaning which Jesus attached to the title, if we admit that he used it of himself, again one can only state a personal conclusion which other students may accept or reject according to their reading of the evidence. It is that Jesus used the title as having supernatural implications which he was willing to accept, though not knowing how these implications might be made good for him, and that the title, being less fixed and rigid than the more popular title of Messiah, was more acceptable to him because it was capable of expansion from his own experience.

As to what others may have understood by it, it may be that at first the disciples were not aware that he was using it of himself, and that when later they did realize it, and their memory of his use is stamped upon the records, they felt that they could not wholly understand it, and after his death preferred to use first "Messiah"

in the early stages of the preaching, and later "Lord" in the spread of the preaching to Greek circles.

(iv) Paul's silence is probably to be explained, first by the fact that the phrase would be unintelligible in Greek circles, and secondly for the reason mentioned above that the early circle from whom Paul's first acquaintance with the Christian tradition was derived did not understand and did not use the phrase, although their faithfulness to the historical facts compelled them to record Jesus' use of it.

The student who wishes to work out the subject in detail may be referred to the following:

Charles: "Eschatology, Hebrew, Jewish, and Christian," pp. 260-264.

Driver: Art. "Son of Man," in Hastings' "D.B."

*Foakes Jackson & Kirsopp Lake: "The Beginnings of Christianity," Vol. I. pp. 368-384.

Kirsopp Lake: "Landmarks of Early Christianity," pp. 48-52.

*Dalman: "Words of Jesus," Art. "Son of Man," pp. 234-267.

* (Particularly important.)

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